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on Page 45.










  
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## A Passion for Plants

I first gazed upon the pearly bloom of a *Trillium ovatum* 15 years ago. When I began to study botany and wildcrafting in the Cascades that year, I discovered that these enchanting lilies were being harvested and sold on the herb market. The thought of our old growth forests without the beloved Western *Trillium* was heartbreaking. Thankfully, I was not alone and through conservation we can still enjoy these harbingers of spring.

Today, I teach my students that ethical wildharvesting requires a relationship not only with the plants we use, but with the complex ecosystems where the plants grow. With that relationship comes the immense responsibility of stewardship.

It's this commitment to stewardship that shapes my work as Quality Control Manager at Mountain Rose Herbs. I strive to raise industry standards and preserve our ethical foundation, and will never compromise the quality of herbal products we carry or the health of the unique ecology we all treasure.

Steven Yeager  
Lab & Quality Control Manager





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## The Spring Renewal Issue

Make the dark chocolate dip at right; whip up the cover recipe; plant with hardy silver herbs (pictured below); make your own medicine; and more.

### Grow a Medicinal Herb Garden

Discover five easy-to-grow herbs that you can use to help ease digestion, fight insomnia, reduce fevers and treat wounds at home.

**Page 28**

### Save on Groceries: A Plate Full of Plants

Eat your way to a healthier bank balance and lower your risk of chronic disease with our simply delicious vegan recipes.

**Page 40**



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Howard Lee Puckett

### 7 Delicious Recipes to Fight Aging

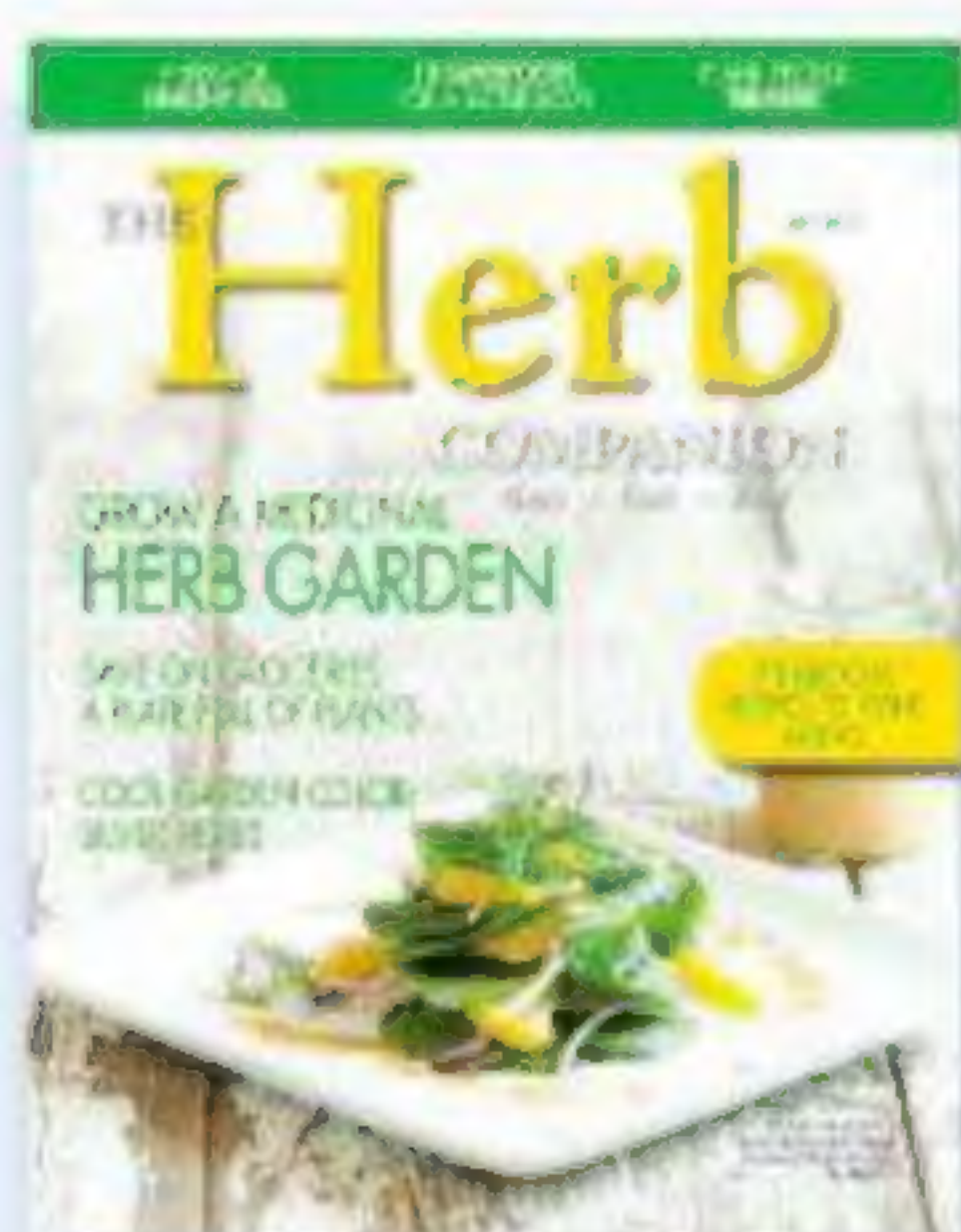
Infuse anti-aging superfoods with health-boosting herbs for a delicious menu that helps you live longer and healthier.

**Page 32**

### Cool Garden Color: Silver Herbs

These eye-catching, hardy plants can promote garden peace or add a zing of contrast to your favorite herbal beds.

**Page 48**



Cover photo: Povy Kendal Atchison

### Herbs for Healthy Eyes

Combat common degenerative eye diseases with nine herbs to control your blood sugar, improve visual acuity and protect your retinas.

**Page 63**

### 10 Superfoods for a Better Body

What is a superfood? Find out the truth about healthy eating, and discover the four herbs that can enhance our 10 dietary superstars.

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### Plant Profile: Turmeric

Using this versatile plant is an Ayurvedic tradition. Learn how it can improve skin health, kill cancer cells, treat arthritis and more.

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VOLUME 23, NUMBER 4

May 2011

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The Herb Companion Volume 23, Number 4 (ISSN 1040-581X) is published bimonthly by Ogden Publications Inc., 1503 SW 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609, (785) 274-4300. USPS #004-086. Periodical postage paid at Topeka, KS 66609, and additional mailing offices. Canada Post International Publications Mail Product Sales Agreement No. 40601019.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Herb Companion, Subscriptions, 1503 SW 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Send all subscriptions and renewals to The Herb Companion, Subscriptions, 1503 SW 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609. For subscription inquiries in the U.S. call (800) 456-6018. Outside the U.S., call (785) 274-4300. Subscription rate is \$24/year in the U.S. Foreign and Canadian subscribers please pay \$34/year for surface delivery or \$54/year for Air Mail. U.S. Funds only. Subscribers: If the Post Office alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within two years.

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Taylor Cole Miller

## The Game of Creating a Garden

By the time you read this, I already will be at work transforming my backyard from turf to terrific garden. I don't relish this process, given that the grass is Bermuda and the thatch is thick. I am motivated by a powerful desire to look out the window and see an abundance of flowers and green, growing things, and to have plenty of herbs just steps from my back door.

Given that our office now features an employee-created vegetable garden and there's a great farmers' market in my hometown, I think I'll leave the vegetables to others. Instead, I'm planting as many pretty flowers as I think the space will hold and interspersing them with fragrant, lovely, delicious herbs.

I have been greatly aided and abetted in this adventure by our cool new Herb Garden Planner, an online tool that's like a video game with plants. Unlike popular online games like Farmville (to which certain people I know and love—my sister—are completely addicted), the little plant- and garden-feature icons actually can end up creating part of your physical environment. The planner generates a personalized planting schedule based on local frost dates and sends biweekly e-mail reminders of what to plant. I give it my highest recommendation ("Way Cool") and hope you'll give it a test drive at [www.herbcompanion.com/herb-garden-planner](http://www.herbcompanion.com/herb-garden-planner). The first 30 days are free and, it's \$25 a year thereafter. Such a deal.

It's spring again and time to start thinking about playing in the great outdoors. If you live in northern California, the state of Washington or in the southwestern Pennsylvania region, we hope you'll come see us at the Mother Earth News Fair. Our *Herb Companion* stage will feature lectures and discussions about all things herbal throughout the days of the fair. Please check [www.motherearthnewsfair.com](http://www.motherearthnewsfair.com) for dates and locations. If you know you'll be attending, please drop a note to us here, [editor@herbcompanion.com](mailto:editor@herbcompanion.com), so we can do our best to meet you personally and write about meeting you at the event on our blogs. We truly love to see our readers at these events.

I am excited about this issue of *The Herb Companion* because it provides such a depth of information reflecting all sides of our favorite plants. They're beautiful in the garden, full of health and overflowing with flavor. We hope you're inspired and are out there digging in the soil in a great big garden or a little bitty container, and getting some herbs "up close and personal" in your life.

Onward!

K.C. Compton  
Editor in Chief

### Blog With Us

If you'd like to write about your experiences as part of our community of bloggers, send a note to [editor@herbcompanion.com](mailto:editor@herbcompanion.com). We'd be delighted to publish your reports about herb gardening in your region, making herbal tinctures or beauty products, or other herbal endeavors.

### Talk to Us

Follow us on Facebook to join a lively and ongoing conversation with herb lovers at [www.facebook.com/theherbcompanion](http://www.facebook.com/theherbcompanion). We love to talk about herbs with our readers!



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Vol. I-II-III

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## Talk Back: Growing a Medicinal Garden

In the March 2011 issue, we asked readers which medicinal herbs they like to plant, in anticipation of this issue's "Grow a Medicinal Herb Garden" article (Page 28).

HERE ARE THE medicinal herbs I am most interested in: astragalus, all heal, feverfew, fenugreek, common mallow, lovage, pasqueflower and meadowsweet.

I have found, however, that starting herbs from seed is much more difficult than the veggies I start each year. I would appreciate if you could incorporate a few tips for starting herbs from seed.

Tina Ross  
Eureka Springs, Arkansas

Sure! Learn about starting herbs from seed at [www.herbcompanion.com/seedstarting](http://www.herbcompanion.com/seedstarting). —Eds.

# Dear Herb Companion,

I FIXED UP the Pimento Cheese with Horseradish recipe and made grilled cheese sandwiches (from the cover of the March 2011 issue, pictured at left); my husband said it was the best grilled cheese sandwich he had ever had! I also made the Pear Crisps with Horseradish as a nice way to end the meal.

I even liked the gremolata that went with the Aromatic Red Wine Stew so well that I tried another version. I made the gremolata using cilantro as the herb and served it with chili. I didn't know I would get so many great recipe ideas from this magazine, I thought I would just learn about growing herbs. What a nice surprise! I can hardly wait for spring to start up my herb garden again.

Kathy Lareau  
Dimondale, Michigan

YOUR CHICKEN AND Parsley Noodle Soup recipe from the January 2011 issue turned out delicious! We took a day and made a big bunch of the noodles and froze them so we could make the soup more quickly in the future. Thanks!

Brandina Vines  
Carrollton, Texas

I RECEIVE YOUR weekly e-newsletter and I just love it. I recently have been informed of a type of basil used in South America. In Guyana, they call it "married man pork;" in other places it's called "mosquito bush." Do you know where I can find this in the United States? My friends from South America say that the basil found in the stores here doesn't have the same taste. They have used this herb for cooking and for traditional healing. Thanks so much for any assistance.

Angela Alton  
Hayward, California

According to *The Encyclopedia of Herbs*, it may be *Ocimum gratissimum* subsp. *gratissimum*, "fever plant" or "mosquito plant." We suspect this is the thyme-scented variation (sometimes designated *O. viride*), but it may also be a local cultivar not available in the North American trade. —Arthur O. Tucker, co-author of *The Encyclopedia of Herbs*

THANK YOU FOR your article "Best Foods for Hypothyroidism" in the March 2011 issue. It was stated that cooking may inactivate goitrogens. That seems to be true, but not for millet. Cooking millet actually increases the goitrogenic action.

Kim Paynter  
San Antonio, Texas

This is true about millet, Kim. Thanks for the info. —Eds.

I JUST READ the March 2011 article about hypothyroidism in your magazine. I have seen lots of other articles on the subject, in other media sources, but you don't see articles written on hyperthyroidism. I have been diagnosed with hyperthyroid and I would love to see something written about it. Other than that, I just found your magazine and I love it! Thanks and keep up the good work!

Dana Beck  
Keller, Texas

Thanks for the good words, Dana. We'll take a look at this in a future issue. —Eds.

I LOVED YOUR article "Cook Up Your Own Cat Food" on natural pet food and herbal supplements for pets in the March 2011 issue. We have been feeding our cats,



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## Tell Us What You Think

In our next issue, we will tell you how to help build a world that's safe for pollinators. How do you attract pollinators to your garden? Please e-mail [letters@herbcompanion.com](mailto:letters@herbcompanion.com) with "In Basket" in the subject line.

dogs, horses, cows, and poultry an all-natural diet for years now and supplementing with herbs. The results speak for themselves. All have healthy, shiny coats. The cats and dogs have no tartar on their teeth, no doggie/cat body odor, no skin issues whatsoever. They are fed home-prepared food supplemented with raw meat and bones—thanks to our cattle operation! All are extremely healthy.

For the horses, cows and poultry, we feed only grass and hay and populate our pastures with many herbs so that they can "self-medicate" as needed for vitamins, minerals and other benefits from the plants. They will routinely choose what they need when they need it—alfalfa, clover, dandelion and chickweed in spring and summer to meet their vitamin A requirements. They chew parsley, plantain, honeysuckle, berry brambles, wild roses and many other plants to stay healthy. As a result, we have almost no issues that are common to horses and cattle such as scratches, biting lice, rain rot and others.

L.M.  
Virginia

I HAVE AN alternative to the "Rosemary Mayo" tip on the last page in the March 2011 issue. I love the notes on spicing up mayo, but I have forgone mayo in my house, for the most part, because of how

dietarily heavy it is. I instead keep a supply of plain cream-top or Greek-style yogurt, which is much better for you than mayo.

When I first switched, I was very subtle about it and my husband didn't even realize he wasn't eating mayo for months, until he went to make his own sandwich one day, and now he thinks it is great.

Eryn La Forest  
Olathe, Kansas

Thanks, Eryn. Great idea! —Eds.

AHHH, HORSERADISH! (See the "Horseradish: 2011 Herb of the Year" article in the March 2011 issue). So easy to grow—almost too easy. It will overrun your garden, or your yard for that matter, if you don't use it. But is it ever worth it. When I bottle horseradish, I generally do not get a cold. I don't believe any germs can withstand the fumes! I use it on sandwiches, with pot roast and gravy; it is especially good at Easter with hard-boiled eggs. It's great in deviled eggs and egg salad, too. But I particularly enjoy making horseradish jelly. It's really easy, and most recipes online are about the same. I always make extra and give it to my friends. When making it, the horseradish must be drained. I keep the juice in a jar in the fridge, and add it to a shot of vodka (medicinal use, just to clarify!). On that note, a teaspoon or two added to your favorite Bloody Mary is exceptional.

I love your magazine and website. You help me realize that a self-sustaining lifestyle can be a reality sooner than later.

Thomas Kocal  
Lanark, Illinois

I LOVED YOUR March 2011 article "Horseradish: 2011 Herb of the Year." My family and I enjoy making a delicious

sauce to eat with our roasts made from horseradish and sour cream and we like to use horseradish plants as a ground cover to shade out weeds beneath some of our fruit and nut trees. We value it most for its medicinal effects. Eating a spoonful of fresh chopped horseradish helps with opening the breathing passages. Even before we eat it, the smell of it begins to open up the passageways.

Sean Kearsey  
Goblins Glen Botanical Sanctuary, Ohio

## Facebook Fodder



*What seed company do you like best for purchasing herb seeds and starts?*

SUE MARTINEZ: I have a wonderful herb greenhouse nearby called Lily of the Valley herbs, where I buy my herb plants. Many different herbs to choose from there.

BETTY PILLSBURY: Horizon Herbs, The Thyme Garden Herb Company, Crimson Sage, Companion Plants, Possum Creek Herb Farm and Richters.

AMY SWANN: The herb movement is growing and more local small businesses are selling them. So, as a small nursery owner, please try to buy locally.

KRIS BRADLEY: Johnny's Selected Seeds. Great selection and SUPER customer service!

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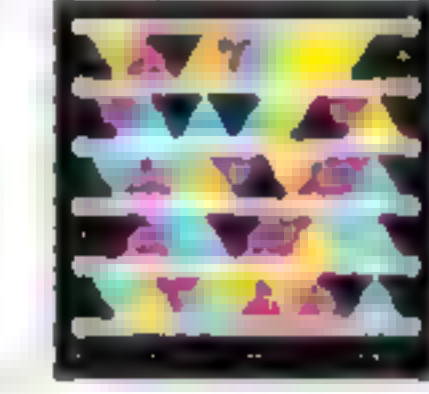
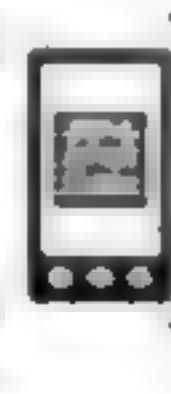
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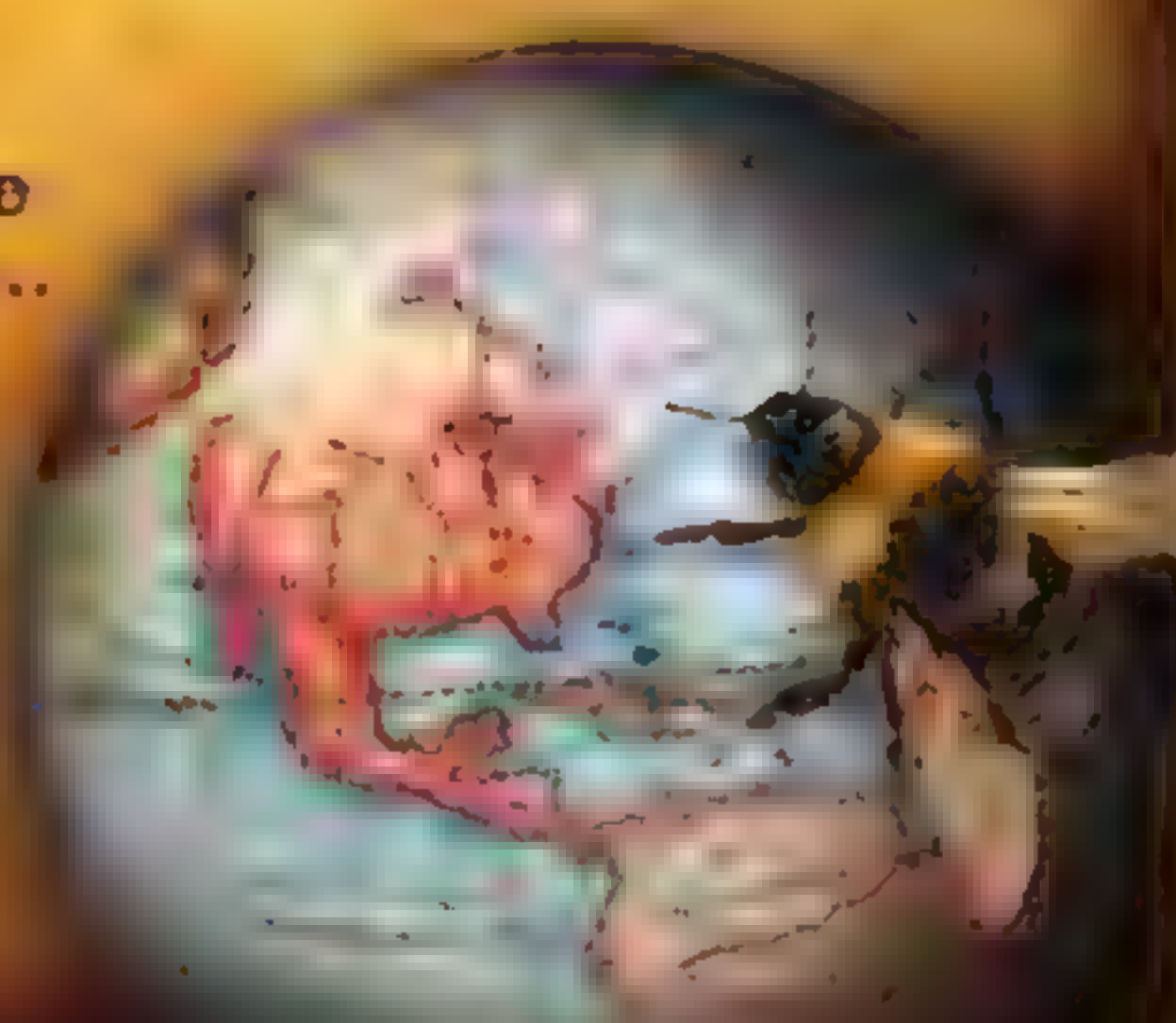
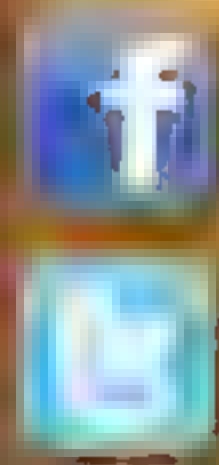
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## GARDEN TO TABLE

# Ground Rules

THIS YEAR, go from the ground up to grow great herbs. Try these essential soil tips and kitchen-prep pointers.

🌿 Organic matter also serves as an excellent mulch for moderating soil temperature, keeping weeds under control and the soil evenly moist.

🌿 Fertilize and improve soil structure at the same time by incorporating organic matter, such as compost, fish meal or aged manure, that also provides a wide range of nutrients.

🌿 To slice large-leaved herbs, such as sage and basil, stack several leaves together and roll leaves lengthwise, then cut into thin strips with a santoku knife.

🌿 For easy mincing of herbs, strip the leaves into a cup and use the pointed end of sharp scissors or shears to mince herbs in seconds. (Early in the season, you can mince both leaves and tender stems.)

🌿 Most culinary herbs grow best in well-drained soil. Whether your soil is sandy, hard clay or somewhere in between, it can always be improved by the addition of organic matter, such as dried grass clippings, shredded leaves or compost.

🌿 Raised beds help improve soil drainage and allow for ample additions of organic matter or quality commercial garden soil. Raised beds also reduce your workload by defining your planting areas so you only water, weed and fertilize your beds and not your paths.

🌿 Simplify the process of slicing, dicing or chopping fresh herbs by using the right knife. The mezzaluna knife has a curved chopping blade that you rock back and forth over the herbs. The santoku knife features a hollow edge that helps keep food from adhering to the surface of the blade.

🌿 Process large quantities of herbs in a food processor equipped with a chopping blade. —Contributing Editor Kris Wetherbee tends her herbs in western Oregon.



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**Fresh  
Clips**

# Varicose Veins Vanquished

BEFORE YOU TRY extreme or surgical measures for ridding yourself of varicose veins, you might want to give herbs a chance. Varicose veins are swollen, bulging and twisted blood vessels. Perhaps you've noticed these blue, serpentine bulges appearing on your own legs. If you have, you know they can make your legs throb and feel heavy. Legs and feet may swell slightly, and overlying skin may itch. Though they're most common in the legs, varicose veins can occur in almost any part of the body. Prevention can help keep the problem from occurring, and many treatments exist—with varying degrees of effectiveness. Herbs can help, too.

Here's what happens: Leg veins have the Herculean task of returning blood to the heart, often working against gravity. When you move, leg muscles massage the vein, "milking" the blood upward.

Normally, valves keep the blood from flowing backward. If a valve becomes incompetent, the blood does flow backward. The vein then dilates, which puts pressure on the valve below.

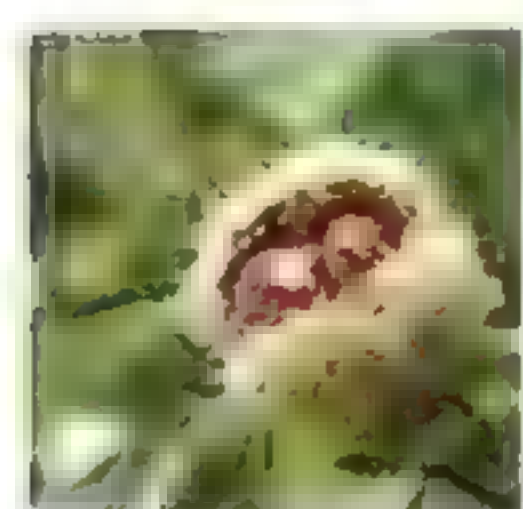
Anything that increases pressure in the legs raises the risk of developing varicose veins: obesity, pregnancy, and activities that involve prolonged standing or heavy lifting. In addition to cosmetic considerations, varicose veins can raise the risk of inflammation of the vein (thrombophlebitis) and blood clots (deep vein thrombosis).

### 5 Herbs for Healthy Veins

A general step is to consume plenty of foods rich in flavonoids, the water-soluble pigments that give plants their color. These compounds tone veins and protect them from inflammation and oxidative damage. Food sources are numerous and include



berries, citrus fruits, parsley, red grapes, green tea, red wine and red cabbage. Several studies have shown a mixture of citrus bioflavonoids called rutosides to be helpful in treating varicose veins.



**HORSE CHESTNUT** (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) is the most popular herbal treatment for varicose veins in Germany.

The herb's active component is thought to be aescin. Extracts of the seed of this tree counter inflammation, tone and protect veins, scavenge tissue-damaging free radicals and block enzymes that break down supporting tissue. Taking horse chestnut extract (containing 50 mg of aescin) works as effectively as physician-prescribed compression stockings.

According to the German Commission E (the regulatory body overseeing medicinal herbs), the initial dosage is usually 250 mg twice daily of an extract standardized to contain 20 percent aescin, or 313 mg twice daily of a 16 percent extract. Once symptom relief is noticed—in a week or two—the dose can be halved. Controlled-release, enteric-coated forms of the supplement minimize stomach discomfort. *Note:* Horse chestnut is not recommended for people with liver or kidney disease. You shouldn't take this herb in combination with blood thinners such as warfarin (Coumadin). Safety during pregnancy and nursing has not been established.



**GOTU KOLA** (*Centella asiatica*) is a tropical plant that enhances the integrity of blood vessels and speeds wound healing. It keeps small vessels from "leaking," thereby decreasing swelling. One study compared two different doses (120 mg per day and 60 mg per day) of gotu kola extract and a placebo over a two-month period.

Another study compared placebo treatment to 90 mg per day (30 mg three times daily) and 180 mg per day (60 mg three times daily) of gotu kola extract. In both studies, the herb was more effective than the placebo and the higher dose outperformed the lower dose. Thrice-daily topical application of gotu kola extract also is helpful.



**BUTCHER'S BROOM** (*Ruscus aculeatus*) is a shrub that, by virtue of its anti-inflammatory and astringent properties, tones the veins. Scientific research now supports a long history of folk use in treating varicose veins. Butcher's broom extracts inhibit enzymes that degrade structural components of veins and render small vessels less permeable (inhibiting fluid from leaking out into the surrounding tissues). A 1988 Italian study showed that a combination of butcher's broom, vitamin C and hesperidin (a citrus bioflavonoid) was safe and more effective than both a placebo and rutoside (a citrus bioflavonoid complex).



**WITCH HAZEL** (*Hamamelis virginiana*) is rich in anti-inflammatory substances and tannins (the mouth-puckering astringent substances also found in red wine and tea). Extracts of the bark of this North American tree, easily found in most pharmacies, have a long tradition of topical use for skin inflammation, hemorrhoids and varicose veins.



**BILBERRY** extract (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), which is rich in flavonoids called anthocyanosides, also can be helpful.

—Linda B. White, M.D., is the co-author of *The Herbal Drugstore* (Rodale, 2000). *Note:* The information provided is for educational purposes and should not be used as a substitute for advice from a qualified health-care practitioner.

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Circle #14; see card pg 61

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Circle #4; see card pg 61





Fresh  
Clips

Try these  
simple herbal tips  
as you prepare your  
home for spring.

# Keep Clean This Spring

WITH SPRING RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER, it's time to make your house a clean and happy home—and preferably a home sans toxic chemicals. Use revitalizing herbs and essential oils, such as basil, juniper, ginger and thyme, to energize your senses and inhibit the growth of microorganisms.

✿ Add a drop of your favorite herbal essential oil to a scrap of fabric or a handkerchief and toss it into the dryer with your clothes for a pleasing scent. Rosemary, sage, lemon balm or cardamom will keep insects away from your wardrobe.

✿ Hide dried herbs in sachets (made from scraps of cloth or paper envelopes) in your furniture to add subtle aromatherapy to any room. Use lavender flowers for relaxation and mint leaves for energy and focus.

✿ Clean wood furniture and floors with tea: Just boil a few tea bags in a quart of water, wipe the surface with the cooled brew and buff with a clean cloth.

✿ Mix a few drops of essential oils with vinegar, lemon juice or baking soda for a natural cleaning agent.

For more ways to keep your home naturally clean, check out our archive at [www.herbcompanion.com/naturallyclean](http://www.herbcompanion.com/naturallyclean).

## Breathe Easy

This all-purpose disinfectant is simple to make and provides an herbal alternative to using common, potentially toxic cleaning products in your home:

Mix 2 tablespoons borax with ¼ cup lemon juice and 2 cups hot water in a spray bottle. Cap and shake until the borax dissolves. Add 20 drops tea tree oil to fight bacteria, fungi and viruses, shake again, and spray on the nearest nonporous dirty surface. Wipe with a clean cloth or scrub, then rinse with clean water. Also try this recipe with lavender or eucalyptus for their disinfectant and aromatherapeutic properties. —*Lauren Holt is an editorial intern at The Herb Companion.*

## Modern Tip from the Medieval Table

Water for washing hands at the table: Boil some sage, then strain off the water and cool it until tepid. Instead, you can use chamomile and marjoram, or rosemary, and cook with orange peel. Bay leaves also work for this. —*One of the items needed for a proper table, according to The Good Wife's Guide: A Medieval Household Book (Cornell University Press, 2010). The book is a 14th-century how-to for household duties, narrated from the point of view of a 63-year-old wealthy Parisian man addressing his new 15-year-old bride on how to adapt to married life with him—and her next husband.*

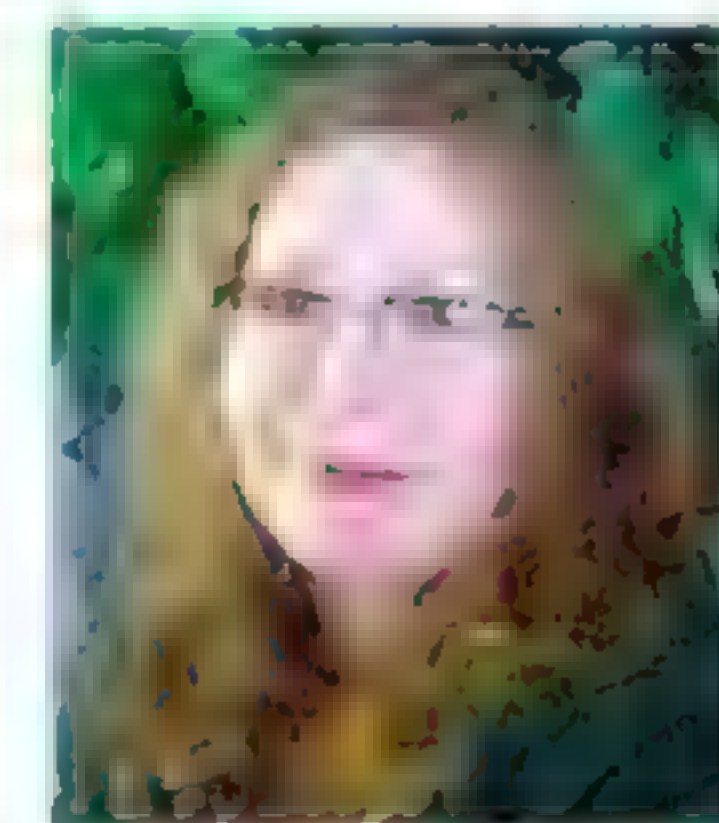


## Fresh Clips

HERBAL BEAUTY

# Defeat Dark Eye Circles with Comfrey Cream

RE-BLOG: Meet Heidi Cardenas, one of our dedicated guest bloggers. If you are interested in blogging on our site, e-mail [editor@herbcompanion.com](mailto:editor@herbcompanion.com) to learn more.



COMFREY (*Symphytum officinale*) is an herbaceous perennial with fuzzy green leaves and bell-shaped flowers. It is a plant in the borage family native to Europe and the Mediterranean. Common names for comfrey include boneset, blackwort and slippery root. Comfrey has astringent and anti-inflammatory properties, making it useful to reduce swelling and bruising and to treat scratches and cuts to prevent infection. A poultice made from fresh comfrey leaves and roots soothes and heals bruises as well as sprained and broken bones. *Note:* For external use only.

Comfrey is an easy herb to grow in the garden or landscape, although it grows large and is best in the back of borders or planted en masse along a fence or in front of an undesirable view. Keep this in mind when choosing a location to grow comfrey. It grows 2 to 3 feet tall in rich, moist soil and does best in bright light with partial shade. It produces blue, white or pink flowers in spring that attract bees and butterflies.

Make a silky eye cream to use under eyes on dark circles and around eyes to smooth wrinkles and dry skin. Cut a small part of the comfrey plant from the crown to the roots and lift it from the garden with stalks and leaves attached. Wash thoroughly to remove all soil, pat dry with a clean towel, and slice or shave the root. Cut leaves off stems and place roots and leaves in warmed olive oil, stirring for an hour over low heat. (Use another oil like sunflower, almond or safflower oil if preferred.) Strain out plant pieces for clear herbal oil to mix with melted beeswax in a food processor or blender. Use 1 pound beeswax with 2 cups herbal oil for large batches and 1/4 pound beeswax with 1/2 cup herbal oil for about five 4-ounce jars of cream. Add a few drops of essential oil while blending for a fresh scent. I like orange best, but spearmint, lemon and almond essential oils also work well with comfrey eye cream.

It is easy to use comfrey for home first-aid and other personal-care preparations. Make comfrey eye bags by cutting and washing fresh comfrey leaves, blanching them in boiling water and wrapping them in large gauze pads. Place warm or chilled bags on puffy eyes or eyes with dark circles for soothing relief. Make larger warm poultices for sprained toes or fingers. Comfrey poultices are very effective on sprained or broken ribs and bruised shins. —You can check out all of Heidi Cardenas' guest blogs at [www.herbcompanion.com/heidicardenas](http://www.herbcompanion.com/heidicardenas).



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Circle #5; see card pg 61

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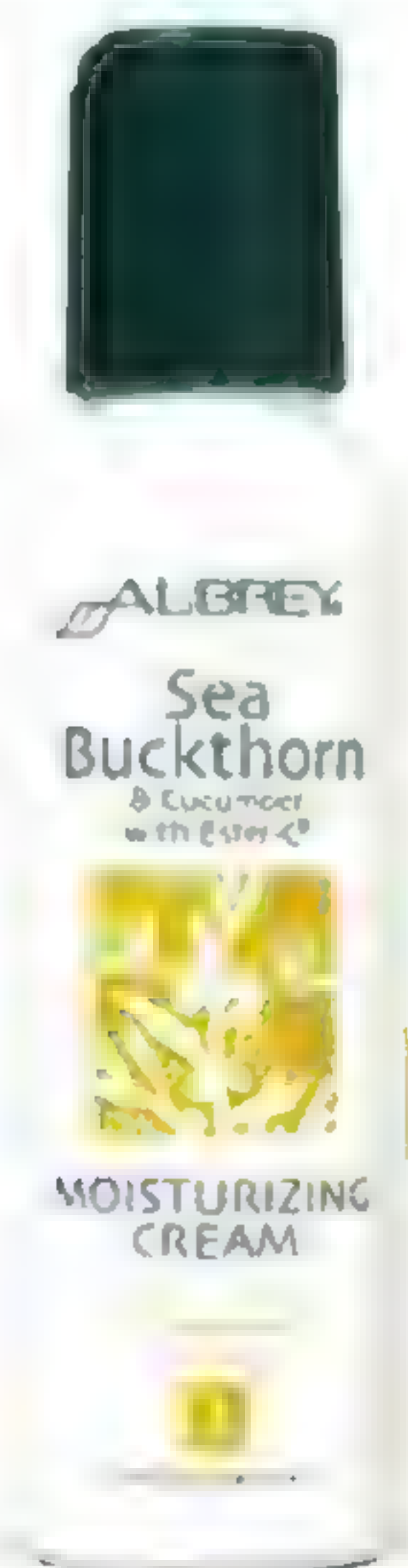
## Don't Try This At Home!

"Italian women dropped mild tinctures of deadly nightshade into their eyes to dilate their pupils, which they thought made them more alluring. The name 'belladonna' may come from this practice; it means 'beautiful woman,' but the term might also originate from *buona donna*, a medieval witch doctor who treated the indigent with mysterious potions." —From *Wicked Plants: The Weed That Killed Lincoln's Mother & Other Botanical Atrocities* (Workman Publishing, 2009) by Amy Stewart



You can grow a single comfrey plant as a shrub or plant an entire border of the herb, but beware of the plant's invasive tendencies if allowed to re-seed. Clip off seed heads before they dry and disperse seeds.

Heidi's favorite varieties: 'Hidcote Blue' (green foliage and blue flowers); 'Goldsmith' (dark green foliage with cream borders and pale blue flowers); and 'Axminster Gold' (blue flowers with blue-green foliage).



## Editor's Pick

Sea Buckthorn & Cucumber with Ester-C Moisturizing Cream by **Aubrey Organics**, \$16.92.

Smooth this skin-nourishing cream under your eyes to bid farewell to wrinkles and dark circles. This blend is made with aloe, rose hips and evening primrose to soothe morning puffiness and sea buckthorn to heal and rejuvenate the skin. We love its silky texture and that it's cruelty-free. [www.aubrey-organics.com](http://www.aubrey-organics.com)

To learn about more cruelty-free cosmetics, check out this blog series: [www.herbcompanion.com/cruelty-free](http://www.herbcompanion.com/cruelty-free).

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# Old Remedies for New People

BY BRIGITTE MARS AND  
CHRYSTLE FIEDLER

## Did you know?

Avoid congesting foods (dairy and wheat are common culprits) if you are nursing a baby with an ear infection. One of the causes of earaches can be an allergy to cow's milk and other dairy products. A food sensitivity may cause an increase in mucous production and even swelling, thus creating blockage and pressure.

When your child is screaming at four in the morning, it makes sense to reach for time-tested home remedies. Babies and children respond well to the gentleness of natural solutions, but when in doubt, always see your pediatrician.

### Fight Ear Infections

Babies and young children often have earaches. Earaches are classified as either otitis externa, which is an infection and inflammation of the external ear, or otitis media, which pertains to the middle ear. In the latter, excess fluid and mucous impair drainage through the Eustachian tubes. Symptoms of ear infections include pain, throbbing, discharge, and/or a feeling of fullness. Infants too young to talk may cry shrilly, pull and rub their ears, and have low-grade fever and/or diarrhea.

To help the body fight an ear infection,

use the very effective herb echinacea (*Echinacea purpurea*, *E. angustifolia*). This herb has large polysaccharide molecules, which the body perceives as bacteria, thus the white blood cell production becomes activated, making the immune system stronger. One simple way to administer echinacea to a baby is in an extract or tincture form. Look for kid-friendly products made with vegetable glycerin rather than alcohol, such as those from WishGarden Herbs' Children's Health line. They can be placed directly in the child's mouth or added to beverages.

When an ear infection is present, gently massage behind the ear, around the outer ear and ear opening, and pull slightly on the earlobes, massaging gently down the neck to encourage lymphatic drainage. Rubbing the temples helps increase blood flow to the area as well as to move toxins.



Using a drop or two of lavender essential oil makes this antiseptic as well.

Stimulate the reflex point to the ears by pressing deeply for about 20 seconds in a circular motion at the base of and between the fourth and fifth toes. These points may be tender yet often provide relief. Massaging children with two drops of essential oil of lavender will help relieve congestion and alleviate pain. Massage behind the ear, down toward the neck. Keep away from the eyes and mouth.

### Soothe Teething Pain

Teething is a time that may leave both parent and child sleepless and slightly frazzled. Here's how to soothe your baby.

If you are a nursing mom, try drinking catnip and chamomile tea. Both herbs are quite calming. You can also soak a washcloth in the cooled tea and allow your baby to chew on the cloth.

Unsulfured dried apple rings make handy teething food. One of their virtues is that you can put the fruit ring around a couple of the baby's fingers, thus prolonging the amount of time before the object falls to the floor. Several types of natural teething cookies are also available. Be present anytime you allow a baby to chew on something, in case he should choke.

### Calming Colic

Colic can be stressful both for you and your baby. The most common symptom of colic is when babies draw their knees up to their stomach and furrow their forehead. Colic happens when trapped gas causes spasms in the still-developing digestive system. Tension in the home environment can also be a contributing factor.

It is also possible that the baby is sensitive to something the nursing mom is ingesting. For some babies, sensitivity to

## Herbs for Colicky Babies

Herbs to treat colic can be taken by the nursing mother. Ideally, the nursing mother will drink a cup of the tea or take capsules three times daily. These herbs can also be taken in tablespoon doses in bottles by infants older than 3 months of age.

The following herbs are gentle and help ease digestion by increasing circulation to the digestive tract due to the presence of essential oils:

{	Anise seed	Cumin seed	Lemon balm	}
	Catnip	Dill seed	Peppermint	
	Chamomile	Fennel seed	Spearmint	

### Soothing Practices for Colicky Babies

Massage the baby's abdomen gently in a circular clockwise motion (up on the baby's right, across and down on the baby's left; the direction the intestines move food through) with 1 ounce olive oil scented with 5 drops anise, chamomile, fennel, ginger or peppermint essential oil.

You can also give your baby a warm bath in which you add 3 to 5 drops of one of these essential oils or several cups of chamomile tea.

You can also soothe your baby by applying a warm (not hot) compress of ginger or peppermint tea over the baby's abdomen. Cover with a dry towel to hold the warmth in. For a different solution, wrap a warm (not too hot) hot water bottle in a towel and apply it next to the baby's belly to provide relief.

It helps to carry a colicky baby with his or her belly against your shoulder. Rocking and car rides can also be soothing. Be sure and keep the baby's feet warm, which helps them feel more relaxed and secure, and thus calmer.

Exercise can also help a colicky baby. Gently take the baby's legs and pretend they are pedaling a bicycle by pressing the legs to the baby's stomach and then out and down. Lay the baby across your knees and gently rub his or her back.

Feed babies who suffer from colic small, frequent meals rather than large ones to minimize gas. Be in a relaxed state when feeding the baby as babies pick up on your stress and tension. Keep the baby's head above the feet when feeding, which allows burps to be released more easily.

After you've tried everything, it might just be time to drink a cup of relaxing tea yourself!





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Circle #7; see card pg 61

cow's milk that the mother is consuming can cause infant colic. So try switching to goat's milk, which is much easier to digest. Adding 1 tablespoon of liquid acidophilus per 8 ounces of milk can also help digestion. Signs that might indicate that the baby is allergic to something the mother is eating include red cheeks, constipation, frequent ear infections, dark circles under the eyes, spitting up frequently, gas and sweating while nursing. Foods to avoid because they can cause colic include wheat, corn, beans, sugar, chocolate, nuts and curries. Foods that are likely to give the mother gas such as cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and kale, as well as beans, garlic and onions, are also likely to aggravate colic in infants. Cucumbers, green peppers, tomatoes, fried foods, eggs, alcohol, peanuts and caffeine are all also notorious contributors. The tips on Page 23 can provide much-needed relief. Nursing mothers can also take a magnesium supplement (500 mg daily), which helps prevent the spasms of colic by relaxing the muscles.

### Moisturizing Cradle Cap

Cradle cap is a type of infantile seborrheic dermatitis caused by overactive sebaceous glands or in some cases by a yeast called *Pityrosporum ovale*. It is not caused by poor hygiene. Babies may have flaking of the skin and redness on the scalp and head and also under the arms and groin area. It is not itchy, contagious or painful and tends to bother the parents more than the child. This usually begins between 2 weeks and 3 months of age and can last until the toddler stage.

You can try supplements when you are nursing; add two omega-3 capsules and burdock root tea to your daily diet to respectively help in fat metabolism as well as in controlling any fungus, as poor fat metabolism and yeast overgrowth can be causes for cradle cap. Another thrifty cure is to give the baby an oatmeal bath. Tie oatmeal in a square of



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## Soothing Stretch Marks

Stretch marks are common after pregnancy. It's important to lubricate your body daily to prevent them.

This is especially important the last three months of pregnancy, so your skin will be supple and stretch during delivery. Apply this Pregnant Belly Butter to the perineal area, belly, hips, thighs and breasts, which are all areas where stretch marks can occur. Here's how to make it:

### Pregnant Belly Butter

½ ounce calendula flowers, crushed  
½ ounce comfrey leaves, crushed  
2 cups olive or coconut oil  
1 tablespoon vitamin E oil  
5 drops lavender essential oil

- 1** In a dry, clean glass jar, place crushed herbs and olive oil. Allow to steep for 2 weeks.
- 2** Strain through a clean, dry cotton cloth while squeezing the oil out of the herbs. Discard the herbs.
- 3** Stir in vitamin E and lavender oil. Bottle. Apply to areas prone to stretching at least twice daily.



cheesecloth with string, and add it to your baby's bath. Use the oatmeal that exudes from it to wash your baby's scalp.

At night, rub the baby's scalp with 1 teaspoon of olive oil or coconut oil scented with 3 drops lavender or rosemary essential oil. You'll also want to avoid using harsh soaps and shampoos on the baby. Instead, wash the baby's scalp with a tepid tea of burdock root, chamomile, chickweed, meadowsweet or violet leaf. Leave the tea on the scalp and when it is dry, apply some cocoa butter on the scalp to soften the crusts. Use a fine-tooth comb to loosen the afflicted spots.

### Diaper Rash Remedies

Painful diaper rash can occur when either the mother's or the baby's diet is overly acidic. It may indicate that tomatoes, citrus products, sweets and even fruits are being overconsumed. To heal diaper rash, as a first step, keep the baby's bottom diaper-free as much as possible, ideally exposed to sunlight, and change the diapers more often.

Try applying plain yogurt to your baby's bottom to help clear up a persistent diaper rash. Also consider giving your baby an internal probiotic supplement that is formulated for infants. (Nursing mothers may also want to use an adult acidophilus supplement.) Acidophilus, a type of probiotic, is a friendly bacteria that naturally occurs in yogurt. Since many diaper rash conditions can be due to yeast overgrowth, this is balanced by the probiotics. You can also apply calendula salve to your baby's bottom. 🌿

*Brigitte Mars and Chrystle Fiedler are the authors of The Country Almanac of Home Remedies: Time-Tested and Almost-Forgotten Wisdom for Treating Hundreds of Common Ailments. Aches & Pains Quickly and Naturally (Fair Winds Press, 2011), from which this article is excerpted. Buy on Page 60.*

## Try These

Don't have time to whip up our recipes? You can soothe diaper rash, calm colic and care for stretch marks with these *Herb Companion* picks.

Diaper Rash & Thrush by **Motherlove**, \$9.95.  
[www.motherlove.com](http://www.motherlove.com)

Diaper Skin Soother Plus by **Emily Skin Soothers**, \$14. [www.emilyskinsoothers.com](http://www.emilyskinsoothers.com)

Natural Stretch Oil by **Earth Mama Angel Baby**, \$19.95. [www.earthmamaangelbaby.com](http://www.earthmamaangelbaby.com)

Heal Colic by **Healing Natural Oils**, \$26.95.  
[www.amoils.com](http://www.amoils.com)

Tamanu Oil by **Mountain Rose Herbs**, \$6.25.  
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## Turmeric

*Curcuma longa*

Also known as the golden spice or Indian saffron

Zones 7 to 10

# Stay Well with Tasty Turmeric

BY GINA DEBACKER

Many Indian brides anoint their skin with a sacred golden spice the night before their wedding to capture a natural glow. This treasured spice is the herbaceous turmeric, well-known for its vibrant color and abundant healing powers.

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*), a member of the gingerroot, or Zingiberaceae, family, thrives in hot, moist climates such as China, South Africa and India, and grows 3 to 5 feet high. It's a perennial plant with orange-red blossoms resembling lilies.

Although its flowers are stunning, its rhizome, or underground stem, is what attracts the most attention. When dried and ground, its rhizome yields a sharp yellow powder known for its anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and astringent properties. It is also used in an array of Indian dishes, curry being the most popular. It is not as pungent as ginger but emits a sweet aromatic note.

### History and Lore

Turmeric has been in use for thousands of years. In its earliest reference, it was prescribed to charm away jaundice. It was used to worship the sun in ancient India—its golden color most likely the inspiration—and was also worn to ward off evil. Buddhist monks even dyed robes with it.

Historians believe that traders introduced turmeric to the western world during the medieval period, where it was known as “Indian saffron.” Today, it is still considered sacred and used in various rituals. Hawaiian Kahuna and traditional



Vedic homes sprinkle turmeric mixed with seawater to purify the earth around them.

## Health Benefits

Call turmeric a jack-of-all-trades—it's one of the most versatile of all herbal healers. "It's my favorite herb," says K.P. Khalsa, the formulating herbalist for Yogi Tea. Khalsa describes it as a medium-strength herb with virtually no side effects. It is a popular stomach soother; an excellent skin food, treating myriad skin conditions, such as acne, dermatitis and psoriasis; tames oxidation; and relieves pain. In fact, as little as 1/4 teaspoon a day has measurable healing effects. Just be cautious that it doesn't stain your hands yellow with its strong dyeing effects.

Many herbal experts consider turmeric to be the most useful herb in the world, according to Prashanti de Jager, author of *Turmeric: The Ayurvedic Spice of Life* (Pioneer Imprints, 2010). Although it is most commonly used in Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine, modern research is fascinated with its healing properties. A search for turmeric on PubMed, the database of the National Institutes of Health,

produces 1,755 studies.

Most recently, researchers have been analyzing its anti-cancer effects. Results are still early, but evidence suggests that curcumin, the active ingredient in turmeric, may help prevent, control or kill several types of cancer, including breast, colon, prostate and skin. One 2009 study, published in the *British Journal of Cancer*, showed that curcumin starts to kill esophageal cancer cells within only 24 hours of treatment.

Curcumin may also prevent the onset of dementia. Studies suggest that people who eat curry two to three times a week have a lower risk. It may protect the brain against beta-amyloid, a protein that is toxic to brain cells. Clinical trials are still underway, so be on the lookout for more information.

To benefit from turmeric's healing effects, incorporate this aromatic spice in your cooking; use 1 gram per day in capsule form; or try a standardized extract. Talk to your health-care provider before taking any herbs or supplements. ♀

*Gina DeBacker is assistant editor at The Herb Companion. No hands were stained in the making of this article.*



## Try This!

Treat arthritis with this traditional Ayurvedic drink known as Golden Milk. Mix ¼ cup turmeric powder with ½ cup water in a saucepan; bring to a boil. Cook until a thick paste is formed, then store in the refrigerator. To make the drink, mix 1 cup milk with 1 teaspoon almond oil, ½ teaspoon turmeric paste and honey to taste. Stir on low heat and bring just to a boil. Blend to make a foamy beverage.

## Where to Buy

Reap the benefits of turmeric with these five powerful extracts.



Curcumin capsules by **NOW Foods**, \$23.79.  
[www.nowfoods.com](http://www.nowfoods.com)



Turmeric Root capsules by **Mountain Rose Herbs**, \$8.75.  
[www.mountainroseherbs.com](http://www.mountainroseherbs.com)



Turmeric tincture by **Herbalist & Alchemist**, \$21.16.  
[www.herbalist-chemist.com](http://www.herbalist-chemist.com)



Turmericforce by **New Chapter**, \$21.95 to \$29.95.  
[www.newchapter.com](http://www.newchapter.com)



Turmeric capsules by **Oregon's Wild Harvest**, \$27.99.  
[www.oregonwildharvest.com](http://www.oregonwildharvest.com)







# Grow a Medicinal herb garden

By Steven Foster

Save time and money by stocking your backyard or window-sill gardens with five basic medicinal herbs. These superstars will treat common ailments such as colds and flu, inflammation, minor cuts, infections, pain, muscle spasms, anxiety, poor digestion and insomnia.

Growing medicinal herbs may seem difficult, and preparing teas or tinctures from them might appear complicated and time-consuming. But the truth is you don't have to be a skilled gardener to grow a few basic medicinal herbs successfully or be a trained pharmacist to easily prepare them for use. In the process, you may save some money and enjoy yourself.

## Five Basic Herbs

There are many easy-to-grow, easy-to-use herbs that you can harvest and prepare to treat minor illnesses. Every medicinal garden should include chamomile, yarrow, lemon balm, echinacea and peppermint. These five basics are safe and effective for the vast majority of people when used as simple teas, poultices or salves.

## Echinacea: Super Immune-Booster

Echinacea products are among the top-selling herbs in health-food stores. In the United States, you can buy tinctures and capsules made of the leaves, roots and even the seeds of *Echinacea purpurea*, one of nine species of perennial herbs in a genus of the aster family that occurs only in North America. Many gardeners know this group collectively as purple coneflower, but echinacea has emerged as the group's most widely used common name.

*E. purpurea* has been grown as an ornamental in flower gardens for more than 200 years. The Plains Indians used narrow-leaved purple coneflower (*E. angustifolia*), a common prairie species, as medicine more than they did any other plant. In

the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this species was widely touted as a blood purifier and "cure for what ails you." Sales of echinacea preparations were brisk through the 1920s, even among physicians, but the herb fell into disuse soon after the introduction of sulfa drugs and a shift from plant preparations to synthetic drugs.

Today in Germany, extracts, tinctures, ointments, salves and other preparations of *E. purpurea* and *E. angustifolia* are used to strengthen the immune system against some viral and bacterial invaders, uses backed by extensive research performed during the past 30 years.

Plants and seeds of *E. purpurea* are widely available from nurseries and seed houses. The seeds germinate readily, or plants can be easily propagated by dividing the roots. This species does well in any well-drained garden soil, will tolerate up to half shade, and is remarkably drought-resistant. On the other hand, plants and seeds of *E. angustifolia* are harder to find, and the seeds germinate much less readily.

While most references suggest using echinacea root for medicinal use, I make a tea of the fresh or dried flowers of *E. purpurea*: the chemical constituents of the flowers are similar to those of the root. In summer or fall, I simply pour a cup of boiling water over a chopped flower head and steep it, covered, for 10 minutes. For winter use, I make a tincture. I chop an entire plant, place it in a wide-mouthed gallon jar, and pour in around 750 ml of 190-proof grain alcohol (never wood or rubbing alcohol) and a quart of water—just enough to cover the plant material. I put on the lid and set the jar aside for two weeks. At the end of this period, the tincture is ready to use. It will retain its effectiveness for at least a year. I swallow about 30 to 60 drops (1 to 2 teaspoons) of the tincture four or five times a day when I feel a cold coming on.





In Europe, chamomile is so widely used that it's often called the "ginseng of Europe," a reference to that mainstay of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

### Chamomile: Gentle Yet Powerful

Many Europeans and Americans enjoy chamomile tea, which is made from the dried or fresh flowers of the annual German or Hungarian chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*, formerly *M. chamomilla* or *Chamomilla recutita*). Roman or English chamomile, the flower of the perennial *Chamaemelum nobile*, is seldom sold in the United States for medicinal use, although it is commonly grown in herb gardens. German and Roman chamomile flowers may be used interchangeably.

People have used chamomile tea for centuries as a gentle sleep aid (particularly for children), as well as to ease digestion, promote urination and relieve colic. They also used chamomile tea to wash wounds and sores. Today, the pharmacopoeias (official authorities) of 26 countries approve it to treat inflammation, infection, colic, muscle spasms and tension. All uses except sedative claims have been confirmed by recent research.

German chamomile is easily grown from seed. The daisylike flowers usually appear within six weeks of planting, so you often can make two plantings in a single growing season. It does best in cooler climates; in the South, it quickly bolts and shrivels under the intense summer sun. German chamomile likes a neutral to slightly acidic, well-drained sandy loam and full sun. Plants self-sow freely, so you'll probably not need to plant it again after the first season. During the several weeks in which chamomile blooms, you can make several pickings. Spread the flowers in a basket in a warm, dark place to dry.

Making tea with flowers picked from the garden couldn't be easier. Just pour 1 cup boiling water over 1 heaping teaspoon dried flowers, steep, covered, for 10 minutes, then strain into a cup. Sip a cup of tea three to four times a day to relieve an upset stomach or drink a cup to relax before going to bed.

**Note:** Those allergic to the pollen of other aster family members such as ragweed may also be allergic to chamomile.



Yarrow leaves were reputedly bound on the battle wounds of Achilles' soldiers to stop their bleeding during the Trojan War.

### Yarrow: First Aid in the Garden

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), another member of the aster family, is known to many as a perennial weed that grows wild along roadsides, meadows and dry wastelands throughout the Northern Hemisphere. The generic name *Achillea* comes from the legend that Achilles used a poultice of the plant to stop the bleeding of his soldiers' wounds during the Trojan War. Scientists have since discovered that an alkaloid called achilleine is responsible for stanching blood flow. Yarrow contains more than 120 other chemical components, some of which have been shown to reduce inflammation and muscle spasms and relieve pain. Others are believed to ease digestion, calm anxiety, treat baldness and relieve hypertension.

Nearly all yarrows require no care, remain pest-free and are winter-hardy in Zones 3 through 9. As a garden subject, it's an attractive, 3-foot-tall herb whose stems and ferny leaves are covered with woolly hairs. Flat or round-topped clusters of tiny, white or pale, lilac-pink flowers bloom from June through September. Plants are easily grown from seed or propagated by dividing the roots in the spring or fall. Yarrow adapts well to many soil types but thrives in moderately rich soil in full sun. Harvest the stalks when in full bloom and hang to dry.

I use yarrow as a garden first-aid station. Whenever I cut myself while working outdoors, I wash the cut thoroughly (yarrow doesn't inhibit the growth of bacteria), then crush some yarrow leaves or flowers in the palm of my hand, and apply them to the cut. Yarrow can also be used in a salve or poultice for minor cuts and wounds. The bleeding usually stops immediately.

To make a yarrow tea, pour a cup of boiling water over 1 to 2 teaspoons of the dried herb and steep, covered, for 10 to 15 minutes, then sip. Drink three cups per day to treat colds and early fevers. Yarrow is not considered toxic, but some people may have an allergic reaction to it.





Grow lemon balm for its healing powers; when blended with other tea herbs, this fragrant plant adds a fresh, cheery note.

### Lemon Balm: A Tasty Healer

Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*) is a favorite of bees, as its generic name attests: Melissa is Greek for “bee.” Popular among herbalists for 2,000 years, this lemon-scented perennial member of the mint family is also high in essential oil content. (“Balm,” which is derived from “balsam,” refers to aromatic, healing plant resins or oils.) It is native to the Mediterranean region, western Asia, southwestern Siberia and northern Africa, but it is widely naturalized in North America.

Traditionally, lemon balm has been used to reduce fevers and treat colds by inducing sweating; calm the digestive tract; relieve spasms related to cramps and headaches; and overcome insomnia. Recent research has confirmed lemon balm’s ability to calm anxiety, relieve spasms, and inhibit the growth of fungi and bacteria. The German government allows preparations of lemon balm to be labeled as treatments for insomnia related to nervous conditions and gastrointestinal spasms.

A slightly sprawling herb growing to 2 feet high, lemon balm is easy to grow from seeds sown in the spring or early fall. It is hardy in Zones 4 through 9. A fertile, moist soil is ideal. Lemon balm tolerates a wide range of acidity, from pH 5 to 7.8, and likes a cool habitat; it thrives in moist, open spots of California’s redwood forests. If grown in full sun, lemon balm may wilt during hot, dry spells. Plants grown under shade tend to be larger and more succulent than those grown in direct sun. It can be invasive, so prune off the flowering tops before they go to seed.

Lemon balm is a great medicinal herb to grow yourself because it is more effective when used fresh or freshly dried. Harvest it just as the plant comes into bloom. Lemon balm is easy to dry but loses much of its scent upon drying. The fresh leaves make a refreshing tea. Pour a cup of boiling water over a small handful of fresh leaves (or 1 to 2 teaspoons of dried leaves) and steep, covered, for 10 minutes. It is delicious either hot or iced.



Rob Cardillo

Drink a cup of peppermint tea three times a day to aid digestion; the essential oil also is antispasmodic, antibacterial and antiviral.

### Peppermint: Spicy-Sweet Digestive Aid

Mint was mentioned as a stomach aid in the Ebers Papyrus, the world’s oldest surviving medical text, believed to date from the 16th century B.C. Once thought to be a distinct species, peppermint (*Mentha x piperita*) is actually a hybrid between spearmint (*M. spicata*) and water mint (*M. aquatica*).

Peppermint leaf tea was traditionally used to allay insomnia, upset stomach, indigestion, nervous tension, colds (by inducing sweating, it was thought to purge the infection), cramps, diarrhea and nausea. Recent research has shown that the essential oil contains substances that relieve muscle spasms and inhibit the growth of bacteria and viruses. Its primary constituent—menthol—gives this hardy perennial herb its spicy-sweet scent and flavor.


Grow mints in containers, as they can be quite invasive. Peppermint’s stalks grow upward to 3 feet tall nearly as fast as its shallow runners spread horizontally. Its flowers are sterile, so you can’t grow plants from seed, but you can easily increase your stock by dividing the roots. In moist but well-drained soil and full sun, peppermint thrives on neglect; in fact, you may need to dig plants up every year to limit their spread. Harvest leaves as they mature and dry them in a warm, dark place.

Peppermint tea is delicious and refreshing. Pour a cup of boiling water over 2 teaspoons of fresh leaves or 1 teaspoon of crushed, dried leaves. Steep, covered, for 10 minutes. Use more or less herb according to your preference. Drink a cup of this tea up to three times a day to aid digestion.

*Note:* People prone to gastric reflux should not drink peppermint tea. Peppermint relaxes the sphincter between the esophagus and stomach, allowing gastric juices to flow into the esophagus, irritating it and possibly causing inflammation. ☞

Steven Foster is an author and photographer specializing in medicinal plants.





Feeling better in your body at any age doesn't have to involve deprivation. Dark chocolate can reduce blood pressure and balance hormones, plus it's packed with beneficial antioxidants and flavonoids.



# Fight Aging with Every Meal

By Letitia L. Star

Photography by Howard Lee Puckett

Styling by Virginia Cravens-Houston and Judy Feagin

# M

Melt-in-your-mouth dark chocolate. It's just one of many superfoods that can help fight the effects of aging so you look and feel your best, no matter your age. Herbs can ensure that every superfood bite is delicious. That means you can enjoy good-for-you foods without missing dishes laden with fat, salt or refined sugar.

Spring is a wonderful time to commit to eating healthier—and looking and feeling better. Remember that every meal is an opportunity to fight aging. And it may be easier than you think. Even small, positive changes can make a world of difference.

The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends 4.5 cups daily of fruits and vegetables. Select fresh, in-season spring lettuces and other vegetables that are a pleasure to cultivate in your garden or place in your basket at the local farmer's market. Fill your refrigerator with brightly colored fresh produce such as blueberries, apples, sweet potatoes, carrots, tomatoes and dark, leafy greens, just to name a few.

Eat more fiber-rich whole grains with herbs. The AHA recommends at least three 1-ounce equivalent servings of whole grains each day. Savor at least two 3.5-ounce servings of fish, preferably oily fish, a week.

Other important AHA guidelines: Enjoy at least four servings of nuts, legumes and seeds per week. Keep your sodium intake to less than 1,500 mg a day. Don't eat more than two servings a week of processed meats. Make sure that saturated fat is less than 7 percent of your total energy intake. Don't drink more than 36 ounces a week

of sugar-sweetened beverages. And don't forget about superfoods, like delicious dark chocolate.

## Live Longer, Live Healthier

What exactly is a superfood? And how can superfoods help you feel vital? The term "superfood" can be somewhat misleading because no single food is the magic bullet for sustaining youth or the panacea for illness. However, when eaten in moderation along with a healthy lifestyle, superfoods can help you ward off disease or declines in health.

"A superfood is a food that tastes fantastic and also adds significant health benefits," says Jaclyn Chasse, N.D., medical director of the Northeast Center for Holistic Medicine. "One factor in the aging process is free radical damage. Most superfoods contain potent antioxidants to combat free radical damage, protecting cells from aging."

"Healthy, nutrition-rich food can supply us with all the building blocks we need to prevent disease and slow down aging," says Carolyn Dean, M.D., N.D., medical director of the Nutritional Magnesium Association. "Superfoods are high in antioxidants and magnesium. They help destroy free radicals, detoxify the body, and help promote cell function and proper cell repair."

To combat aging, avoid foods high in saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, sodium and refined sugar. "A great way to improve your health is to replace those foods with superfoods that offer more nutritional value," Chasse says.



## 10 Anti-Aging Superfoods

A plethora of superfoods can help prevent disease before it starts. Here are some delicious winners featured in our recipes.

**BEANS:** When it comes to superfoods, beans are all-star favorites. For starters, beans are fat-free and budget-friendly. And they are so good for you.

“Legumes are a major source of complex carbohydrates, fiber and protein,” Dean says. “They have good amounts of minerals such as potassium, magnesium and zinc.”

In order for you to benefit from their minerals, dry beans must be soaked for eight hours or more, though. You can cure blandness by adding herb blends to beans. (See Hearty Herbal Beans recipe on Page 39.)

**CHILE PEPPERS:** “They support circulation and can speed up your metabolism. They are also high in vitamin C,” Chasse

says. For fiery flavor, add garlic and dried chile peppers to beans, chilis, soups and stews. (See Garlic and Ancho Dry Rub recipe on Page 37.)

**SPINACH:** It’s easy to get excited about spinach, which is one of the healthiest foods available. Spinach is high in fiber and loaded with nutrients, including vitamin C and calcium. Spinach combines well with garlic. (See Spinach with Pan-Roasted Garlic recipe on Page 35.)

**LOW-FAT CHEESES:** The American Heart Association recommends low-fat cheeses to help reduce consumption of saturated fat. Small amounts of intense-tasting cheeses, such as low-fat blue cheese crumbles, can quickly add flavor without much fat. (To make crumbles, grate chunks of low-fat cheese with a potato peeler or a hand grater’s large slot.)

The marriage of herbs and low-fat cheeses is richly rewarding.

## 4 Fantastic Culinary Herbs

These four herbs have amazing health benefits while adding fabulous flavor:



**Garlic:** This pungent, much-loved herb has superstar status: It fights infection, helps prevent cancer and keeps the heart healthy. To release garlic’s healing properties, finely chop, mince or crush garlic cloves. Garlic also supports the body’s digestive and hormonal systems, Chasse says.



**Ginger:** Ginger is a potent antioxidant that can inhibit inflammation, relieve motion sickness and reduce excess blood clotting. For a tasty and healthful stir-fry, sauté nutrient-packed vegetables, such as chopped broccoli, carrots, onions, napa cabbage and tomatoes with minced fresh ginger.



**Turmeric:** Turmeric contains curcuminoids and is probably the most antioxidant-rich, anti-inflammatory culinary herb. Frequently used in Indian cooking, turmeric creates curry powder’s bright color. (To read more about turmeric, turn to “Stay Well with Tasty Turmeric” on Page 26.)



**Horseradish:** Horseradish, which is 2011’s Herb of the Year, is very nutrient- and antioxidant-rich. It supports the circulatory system and has antibacterial and detoxifying actions in the body. Make a quick sandwich spread of prepared horseradish by mixing in dill, chives or garlic.



## Spinach with Pan-Roasted Garlic

If blue cheese's flavor is too intense, substitute low-fat feta crumbles or Parmesan shreds. SERVES 2

10 to 15 pan-roasted peeled garlic cloves  
(see directions below)  
2 tablespoons walnut pieces  
1 teaspoon canola or vegetable oil  
4 cups tightly packed fresh baby spinach, divided  
2 tablespoons low-fat blue cheese crumbles, to taste  
Blue cheese crumbles, for garnish

**1** Cook pan-roasted garlic cloves and walnuts in hot oil in a large skillet over medium heat for 1 minute.

**2** Add half of spinach and cook, stirring constantly, until spinach has wilted. Add blue cheese crumbles and remaining spinach. Cook, stirring constantly, until spinach begins to wilt. Top with additional blue cheese crumbles, if desired. Serve immediately.

### How to Pan-Roast Garlic in Minutes

You may quickly become a fan of this easy cooking technique, which yields soft, mellow garlic cloves—and enticing aromas in your kitchen.

**Directions:** Warm about  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoon of vegetable or canola oil in a small skillet. Add unpeeled garlic cloves and toss constantly for about 10 to 15 minutes until browned and soft. Remove garlic cloves from heat; cool and peel. Cut away any brown spots. **Tip:** If cloves are large, cut lengthwise before pan-roasting to reduce cooking time.







## Lavender and Catnip Dreamtime Tea

For a deep, restful sleep, end your day with the healthy benefits of decaf green tea, combined with calming, soporific herbs. SERVES 1

2 cups boiling water  
1 decaf green tea bag OR 1 decaf green tea bag  
and 1 chamomile tea bag  
½ teaspoon fresh lavender buds  
½ teaspoon fresh catnip  
Honey

**1** Pour water over tea bags, lavender and catnip; cover and steep 5 minutes. Remove tea bags.

**2** Pour mixture through a fine wire-mesh strainer into a cup, discarding herbs. Serve with honey.

A quick recipe: Grate Parmesan or Romano cheeses, then add herbs such as ground garlic, rosemary, sage, marjoram, oregano, parsley and thyme. Sprinkle over your favorite pasta dish, egg white omelet or popcorn.

**ASIAN MUSHROOMS:** “Shiitake, reishi and many other Asian mushrooms have been shown to boost the immune system to support your natural ability to fight off viral and bacterial infections, as well as decrease your cancer risk,” Chasse says.

Fresh shiitakes are available at supermarkets, natural food stores and some farmers’ markets. Dried shiitakes are great to have on hand and keep almost indefinitely in your cupboard. Add shiitakes to herb-rich soups and stews. Combined with herbs such as garlic and ginger, shiitakes can make a light, delicious dressing. (See Shiitake and Herb Dressing recipe on Page 39.)

**GREEN TEA:** This superfood has received much acclaim over recent years, and with good reason.

“Green tea contains potent antioxidants that have been shown to prevent cancer and protect cells from damage,” Chasse says. “It also supports liver function.”

During the day, combine green tea with herbs such as ginger and mint for stimulation without high caffeine. In the evening, switch to decaf green tea steeped with lavender, catnip and/or chamomile to help you unwind and relax.

**YOGURT:** Yogurt is a protein source that’s high in calcium. It also contains probiotic bacteria, which helps balance our intestinal flora essential for digestion, nutrient absorption and immune function.

Be sure to buy unsweetened non-fat or low-fat yogurt and add your own herbs, fresh fruits or natural sweeteners. A quick recipe: Mix yogurt with luscious, in-season berries and chopped fresh mint. Another option is an herb-laced Greek yogurt to top savory recipes, like the Hearty Herbal Beans on Page 39. Make it by mixing 8 ounces of plain non-fat Greek yogurt with ¼ teaspoon finely chopped fresh pineapple sage and ¼ teaspoon fresh oregano. Cover and refrigerate up to 2 days. Greek yogurt’s rich-tasting, creamy texture is what makes it so special. Pineapple sage, which has a unique fragrance and taste, is easy to cultivate indoors and out. If pineapple sage isn’t available, substitute any type of basil or parsley.

**DARK CHOCOLATE:** Chocolate lovers take note: Chocolate is high in flavonoids, antioxidants that can protect cells from free radical damage. It also can reduce blood pressure, balance some hormones and help release the brain’s feel-good hormones. The darker the chocolate, the richer it is in flavonoids, Chasse says.

“Chocolate’s high in magnesium, an essential mineral that helps maintain the function of the heart, muscles and nervous system,” Dean says.

The trick is to enjoy chocolate without combining it with butter, cream or refined sugar. Peppermint and spearmint extracts add uplifting herb flavors to cocoa. (See Dark Chocolate Dipping Sauce recipe on Page 38.)

**WHOLE GRAINS:** Increase your longevity by replacing refined white grains with whole grains, which are nutrient-rich and a great fiber source. To consume whole grains, add these



## Two Herb-Laced Dry Rubs

These dry rubs add fabulous herb flavors without fat, salt, refined sugar or dairy. Both dry rubs also work well with tofu, mushrooms and vegetables.

### Garlic and Ancho Dry Rub

This fiery blend is good on lean meats and tempeh. If this mixture is too potent, decrease the ancho and chipotle, and substitute more garlic and paprika.

1 tablespoon granulated garlic  
1 tablespoon ground ancho chile peppers  
1½ teaspoons ground chipotle peppers  
1½ teaspoons sweet paprika

**1** Stir together all ingredients, and store in an airtight container up to 6 months.

**2** Rub mixture on food before cooking; drizzle with a small amount of canola oil, if desired.

### 4-Herb Dry Rub

This fragrant quartet is wonderful on fish, such as salmon. Use ground or cut and sifted dried herbs.

1 tablespoon tarragon  
1 tablespoon sage  
1 tablespoon dill weed  
1 tablespoon thyme

**1** Stir together all ingredients, and store in an airtight container up to 6 months.

**2** Rub herb mixture on food before cooking; drizzle with canola oil, if desired.







The darker the chocolate is, the more healthful flavonoids it contains.

### Dark Chocolate Dipping Sauce

This warm, velvety sauce is naturally sweetened with honey or agave nectar. Use it to dunk slices of healthy fruits, such as apples, cherries, orange slices, raspberries, strawberries, bananas, dried apricots and pineapple. It also makes a rich-tasting topping for low-fat vanilla ice cream or vanilla frozen desserts made with soy, coconut or rice.

- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa (preferably fair-trade)
- 3 tablespoons honey or agave nectar
- ½ cup unsweetened soy milk
- 1 tablespoon cholesterol-free buttery spread
- ¼ teaspoon peppermint extract (optional)

**1** Cook first 4 ingredients in a small, heavy saucepan over low heat, whisking constantly, 5 minutes or until mixture is smooth. Whisk in peppermint extract and enjoy.

fresh or dried herbs: cilantro, parsley, garlic, sage, rosemary, oregano, tarragon, thyme, basil, marjoram, mint and chives.

**SALMON (AND OTHER OILY FISH):** “Salmon and other fish are our only food sources of omega-3 fats EPA and DHA,” Chasse says. “These anti-inflammatory fats have been shown to lower bad cholesterol (LDL), raise good cholesterol (HDL), improve memory and cognition, and provide relief for depression and anxiety.”

Tarragon and dill are popular herbs for fish. Instantly dress up any fish with the 4-Herb Dry Rub. (See recipe on Page 37.)

### 3 Easy Ways to Renew

Your better-body wellness regime can start today with these quick steps:

**1. Hydrate:** Take 5 minutes right now to drink a glass of water. Add fresh herb sprigs, such as basil, tarragon, mint and hyssop, to your water to improve flavor.

**2. Pleasurable exertion:** Take 10 to 20 minutes to tend your glorious outdoor herb garden—which can be excellent exercise. Or repot your indoor herb houseplants.

**3. Get enough sleep:** Before retiring, take 10 minutes to sip a soothing cup of herbal tea. (See Lavender and Catnip Dream-

time Tea recipe on Page 36.)

### Before the First Bite

All this talk of fighting aging is a bit tiring—the goal is really to be well, regardless of age. A healthful diet can go a long way toward feeling great and being able to do the things you like to do.

But please remember that this article is for general educational purposes only, and isn't medical advice. If you currently have a serious illness or condition, particularly cardiovascular disease, consult a qualified health-care practitioner to learn how diet can help your health. 🌱

*Letitia L. Star is a healthy living writer who frequently writes about cooking and growing herbs.*



### ON THE WEB

#### Healthy Eating Resources

Find more resources for making smart nutrition choices at [www.herbcompanion.com/healthyeating](http://www.herbcompanion.com/healthyeating).



## Hearty Herbal Beans

Herbs add culinary excitement to any type of bean, such as pinto, black, kidney and garbanzo. Serve warm as a hearty side dish. For a quick, delicious lunch, serve over whole grains, such as brown basmati rice. Top with chopped tomatoes and herb-laced Greek yogurt (see Page 36). SERVES 2 to 4

2 cups cooked beans (canned are fine)  
½ cup chopped onion  
1 teaspoon canola or vegetable oil  
1 teaspoon minced fresh garlic  
¼ teaspoon ground ginger  
¼ teaspoon ground turmeric  
¼ teaspoon ground cumin  
¼ teaspoon ground coriander  
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 whole bay leaf  
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper (optional)  
Pinch cayenne pepper (optional)  
1 cup water (or low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth)

- 1** Rinse and drain beans; set aside.
- 2** Sauté onion in hot oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat 3 to 4 minutes or until tender; add garlic and cook 1 additional minute.
- 3** Stir in ginger and remaining ingredients. Bring mixture to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes, stirring frequently.

## Shiitake and Herb Dressing

This delicate dressing beautifully complements a fresh spring greens salad or other nutritious vegetables, such as broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, kale or mustard greens. Bragg Liquid Aminos, available at health-food stores, is a low-sodium alternative to soy sauce. MAKES 1 CUP

1 cup hot water  
⅓ cup dried shiitake mushrooms  
1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar  
1 to 2 tablespoons vegetable or canola oil  
1 to 2 tablespoons Bragg Liquid Aminos  
1 teaspoon minced fresh garlic  
¼ teaspoon ground ginger  
¼ teaspoon ground coriander  
¼ teaspoon ground mustard  
¼ teaspoon mustard seed

- 1** Pour hot water over mushrooms in a small bowl. Soak for 30 minutes or according to package directions.
- 2** Remove mushrooms with a slotted spoon, reserving mushroom liquid for dressing. Mince mushrooms.
- 3** Whisk vinegar, oil and Liquid Aminos into mushroom water. Whisk in mushrooms, garlic and remaining ingredients.
- 4** Store in an airtight container in refrigerator up to 5 days.





# A Plate Full of

By Pat Crocker

Most likely, it happens on the way to the meat department at the grocery store. You know you have to find something fast and easy for dinner ... not too expensive ... tasty, oh, and nourishing, too. And then it happens. You enter the fresh produce department and find everything you need.

It's possible you have just become an accidental vegan, someone who borrows from the vegan pantry on a regular basis. Being a dietary vegan simply means not eating meat, dairy foods, honey or other foods derived from animals. Adopting a full-time dietary vegan philosophy is often a personal commitment arrived at over time and with careful thought, but if your food style is in need of an overhaul, especially if you

Photography by  
Povy Kendal Atchison  
Food Styling by Pieter Dijkstra

## Fiddleheads and Soba Noodle Primavera

While the term "primavera" usually refers to an Italian-American pasta dish featuring fresh vegetables, this recipe adds a more cosmopolitan twist by introducing Asian ingredients and North American wild spring fiddleheads. Both soba and udon noodles are Japanese in origin; soba is made from buckwheat flour and udon from white wheat. SERVES 4

8 ounces soba or udon noodles  
½ cup vegetable stock or water  
¼ cup tamari or soy sauce  
1 tablespoon rice vinegar  
1 tablespoon tahini or peanut butter  
2 teaspoons fresh grated ginger  
1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil  
1 tablespoon cornstarch  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 red bell pepper, cut into matchsticks  
6 shiitake mushrooms, caps thinly sliced  
1 cup fresh or frozen fiddleheads, trimmed  
1 cup snow or sugar snap peas, trimmed  
1 can (8 ounces) water chestnuts, drained and thinly sliced  
½ cup almonds

- 1** In a large saucepan of boiling, salted water, cook noodles for 4 to 5 minutes or according to package directions, until al dente. Drain and rinse with cool water.
- 2** Meanwhile, in a bowl, combine vegetable stock, tamari, rice vinegar, tahini, ginger and sesame oil. Whisk in cornstarch and set aside.
- 3** In a wok or large, deep saucepan, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add red pepper and stir-fry for 2 minutes. Add mushrooms and fiddleheads and stir-fry for 2 minutes or until fiddleheads are crisp-tender. Add snow peas and stir-fry for 2 minutes. Add broth mixture and bring to a simmer. Simmer, stirring occasionally, for 1 or 2 minutes or until mixture is thickened. Toss with cooked noodles and water chestnuts and heat through. Garnish with almonds.



*Borrow from the vegan playbook  
now and then to mix up your menu and  
enjoy plant-based meals.*





are motivated by a desire to save on food bills and eat more in-season vegetables, both you and your pocketbook may benefit from the wide variety of whole foods that vegans enjoy.

Eating vegan may save money because you can fill your grocery cart and your dinner plate with in-season fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and legumes. Many of these choices have achieved superfood status and are high in phytonutrients and low in fats. These same vegan staples are the very foods most of the world's people thrive on. Today, even the least expensive cuts of beef average \$3 per pound compared with dried beans and lentils that weigh in at around \$1 per pound. There may be additional health-related payoffs, depending on how much processed foods and trans fats are currently in your diet.

You can benefit from the basics of a vegan diet by borrowing some plant-based recipes and working them into your routine. Spring is an especially good time to reach for lighter fare featuring fresh produce.

There are a few ways to incorporate vegan mealtime strategies into a flexible and consistent diet plan with absolutely no feelings of sacrifice. The first is to learn to use fresh herbs and spices in new combinations of pastes (see our Green Curry Paste, Page 46), seasoning blends, dips and sauces to add a flavor spike to plant-based dishes. Another is to designate one or two days each week as being “vegan-only.” Perhaps the most popular way of achieving a “mostly vegan” approach is to choose only vegan foods for two out of three daily meals, or be “vegan ’til six,” to quote author and *New York Times* writer Mark Bittman, who claims to have lost 35 pounds and resolved some

lingering health issues by following this plan. No matter why or how you increase plant foods, one happy result of paying attention to what you eat by following vegan guidelines is that processed foods and trans fats, as well as many junk foods, are immediately eliminated.

### Herbs as Significant Contributors to a Vegan Diet

It's not only for their flavor that herbs play a major role in the diets of most vegans. Herbs can contribute significant amounts of phytonutrients, which in turn assist a wide range of healthy body conditions. To see a chart comparing three herbs with common foods, visit [www.herbcompanion.com/nutritioninherbs](http://www.herbcompanion.com/nutritioninherbs).

Vegan cooking is the act of preparing strictly plant food with care and enthusiasm. For great-tasting vegan and vegetarian recipes, herb/spice blends, pastes, marinades, sauces, glazes and salsas are essential tools that will take dishes from the ordinary to the extraordinary.

When blending herbs and spices, aim for a balanced mixture that combines woody with fruity; pungent with sweet; or hot and biting with subtle flowery notes. For lighter, fresh spring dishes, we recommend having both fines herbes blend (widely available in food stores) and the Asian Five-Spice Seasoning from Page 46 on hand. Our Cashew Cream from Page 47 and Ginger Dressing from Page 45 are also versatile additions to a vegan pantry—or your accidental vegan routine. ♪

*Author of 12 cookbooks including her latest, Everyday Flexitarian (Whitecap Books, 2011), Pat Crocker is a culinary herbalist and green cook*

### Herbed Tomato-Leek Sauce

One can always find excellent canned organic tomato sauces and I recommend that they be used whenever time is short. But for a tomato sauce with bite, this is the one I make. MAKES 4 CUPS

1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 onion, coarsely chopped  
1 leek, white and green parts, sliced  
4 large cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1 tablespoon finely chopped candied ginger  
1 carrot, shredded  
1 parsnip, shredded  
8 ounces mushrooms, chopped  
1 can (28 ounces) crushed tomatoes and liquid

¼ cup chopped fresh parsley  
3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary  
1 or 2 drops hot sauce, optional

**1** In a saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Sauté onion and leek for 5 minutes. Add garlic, ginger, carrot and parsnip and cook, stirring frequently, for 5 minutes. Add mushrooms and cook for another 3

minutes, stirring occasionally. Vegetables should be soft.

**2** Stir in tomatoes and liquid and simmer gently for 7 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add parsley, basil, rosemary and hot pepper sauce. Cook for 1 minute longer.

**3** Use immediately or cover tightly and store in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.



## Thyme-Tomato and Zucchini Bulgur

Bulgur is a processed grain made from wheat berries that have been steamed, dried and crushed. It cooks very quickly because of the processing. Tabbouleh is a well-known Middle Eastern dish that is made with bulgur, fresh chopped herbs and tomatoes. SERVES 4 TO 6

2 tablespoons avocado or olive oil  
1 onion, chopped  
1 zucchini, chopped  
1 can (28 ounces) stewed tomatoes with juice, chopped  
1 cup vegetable stock or water  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano  
1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves  
1 teaspoon Asian Five-Spice Seasoning  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup medium-textured bulgur  
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

**1** In a saucepan, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, for 3 minutes or until slightly softened. Add zucchini and cook, stirring frequently, for 1 minute. Add tomatoes with juice and stock and bring to a boil.

**2** Stir in oregano, thyme, Asian Five-Spice Seasoning and bulgur. Cover, reduce heat and simmer for 20 to 25 minutes or until bulgur is tender and all or most of the liquid has been absorbed. Season to taste with salt and pepper.





## Tarragon Brazil Nut Rissoles

Although these little rice packets are delicate, they do hold together for finger food platters. I like them best as an appetizer served with a punchy salsa or with Herbed Tomato-Leek Sauce (see Page 42) for a side dish. MAKES 1 DOZEN RISSOLES

1 tablespoon ground flaxseeds  
3 tablespoons water or tomato juice  
1 cup cooked brown rice  
½ cup finely chopped Brazil nuts  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon  
Freshly ground sea salt and pepper  
1 cup fresh breadcrumbs

**1** In a bowl, combine flaxseeds and water. Let stand for 10 minutes or until it becomes gelatinous.

**2** Meanwhile, in a separate bowl, combine brown rice, Brazil nuts and tarragon. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Stir in flaxseed mixture. Using 2 spoons, press the mixture into small “eggs.” Roll the rissoles in breadcrumbs to coat and arrange on a baking sheet. Cover tightly and refrigerate overnight.

**3** Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Bring rissoles to room temperature and bake for 15 minutes, or until lightly browned. Serve hot or at room temperature.



### ON THE WEB

Find our bonus recipe, Garlic White Sauce, at [www.herbcompanion.com/veganpantry](http://www.herbcompanion.com/veganpantry). Also, discover herbal nutrition with our handy herb and food comparison chart.

## Wild Leek and Couscous Loaf

Green, garlicky and fresh, wild leeks are native to forests of the eastern United States and Canada and are at their peak for a short time in the spring. If you plan to seek out these tiny, flavorful herbs, be sure to take only a very small number (one shovel full!) from the outer edges of the patch. This ensures that there will be more to enjoy for years to come.

For this recipe, if using cultivated leeks, you will need one (or two if small). Trim away root end and dark green leaves, split in half lengthwise, clean under cool running water, drain and pat dry. Cut one of the halves in half lengthwise and set the long piece of leek aside to garnish the loaf pan. Chop and measure the remaining leek and use in place of the wild leeks in the recipe. MAKES 1 LOAF

½ cup chopped wild leeks (save 6 whole, with leaves, for garnishing the top)  
2 cups vegetable stock  
½ teaspoon salt  
1½ cups couscous  
3 tablespoons olive oil, divided  
1 onion, chopped  
½ cup chopped red bell pepper  
4 cloves garlic, chopped  
1 tablespoon Asian Five-Spice Seasoning  
2 teaspoons ground coriander  
½ teaspoon red pepper flakes, optional  
1 small zucchini, diced  
8 ounces mushrooms, chopped

**1** Line a loaf pan with plastic wrap, letting it overhang on the long sides. Lay two wild leeks on the base of the pan; set aside in a cool place. Set aside remaining whole leeks to use as garnish.

**2** In a saucepan, bring vegetable stock to a boil over high heat. Remove from heat and stir in salt

and couscous. Cover and let stand for 10 minutes. Fluff with a fork and transfer to a large bowl.

**3** Meanwhile, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a skillet over medium heat. Sauté onion and red pepper for 6 minutes, or until soft. Add garlic, Asian Five-Spice Seasoning, coriander and red pepper flakes. Cook, stirring frequently, for 1 minute. Add remaining oil and cook the zucchini and mushrooms for 7 minutes, or until soft. Let cool.

**4** Add the onion-mushroom mixture to the couscous. Cover and chill for 1 hour. Press the mixture into the tin, gently pressing it in and around the leeks on the bottom of the tin. Fold the plastic wrap over to cover. Weigh down with food tins and chill for 2 hours or as long as overnight. Serve warmed or at room temperature with Herbed Tomato-Leek Sauce (see Page 42).

To warm chilled loaf: remove plastic wrap and return loaf to the loaf pan. Cover the top of the pan with foil and heat at 350 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes or until warmed through.

Because leeks, or ramps as they are often called, grow in moist and well-rotted deciduous forest litter, they must be dug out of the humus (don't try to pull out by the leaves—you will only snap them off). As such, cleaning them takes a certain knack. Here's how: Grasp the leek just above the bulb end. Pull the short, dirty outer layers of white skin back over the roots. Snap off the rootlets along with most of the dirt. Wash bulbs with leaves still intact in cool running water. Drain and dry. Use both green leaves and white bulb in recipes.



## Fennel, Spinach and Orange Salad with Ginger Dressing

Fennel bulb lends a delicate anise flavor to the greens in this salad. Use as much fresh ginger as your taste dictates. SERVES 4



### Ginger Dressing

2 tablespoons grapeseed oil  
2 tablespoons rice vinegar  
1 tablespoon tamari or soy sauce  
2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger  
1 teaspoon organic cane sugar or brown sugar  
¼ teaspoon hot pepper flakes

### Salad

2 cups baby spinach leaves  
2 oranges, sectioned  
½ fennel bulb, thinly sliced  
½ red onion, thinly sliced

**1** In a salad bowl, whisk together oil, vinegar, tamari, ginger, sugar and hot pepper flakes. Add spinach, oranges, fennel and red onion and toss to coat.





## Green Curry Paste

Using fresh, hot green chiles gives this seasoning a good deal of heat so when adding to recipes, start out with a small amount ( $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon) and add more as your preference dictates. Use in stir-fry dishes, salad dressings, sauces, vegetable soups and stews. MAKES  $\frac{1}{2}$  CUP

2 cloves garlic  
2 teaspoons grated ginger  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  onion  
1 tablespoon black bean paste  
7 green chile peppers  
6 fresh or dried lemon verbena leaves  
or 2 stalks lemongrass, minced  
3 sprigs fresh flat-leaf parsley or cilantro  
1 sprig fresh rosemary  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon Brazilian green peppercorns, cracked  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground coriander  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground cumin  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 teaspoons olive oil

**1** In a food processor, combine garlic and ginger. Process until finely chopped. Add onion and black bean paste. Process until finely chopped. Add chile peppers and process until finely chopped. Add lemon verbena, parsley, rosemary, peppercorns, coriander, cumin and salt. Process with the motor running and add the sesame oil through the opening in the lid. Process until a smooth paste is achieved, adding olive oil slowly, in drops, as required for a smooth paste.

**2** Cover tightly or spoon into a sterilized jar and cap with the lid. Store in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

## Green Curry Asparagus

The complex curry flavor adds depth and heat to the nutty taste of roasted asparagus.

SERVES 4

3 to 4 tablespoons Green Curry Paste (above), or to taste  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 pounds fresh asparagus, trimmed  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sesame seeds, to garnish

**1** In a bowl, combine Green Curry Paste and oil. Arrange asparagus in one layer on prepared baking sheet. Drizzle paste mixture over asparagus, turning with a fork to coat all sides.

**2** Roast in the lower half of the oven for 20 to 30 minutes or until browned and tender when pierced with the tip of a knife. Transfer to a serving platter and garnish with sesame seeds.

## Asian Five-Spice Seasoning

If you can find the sweeter, thin-textured *Cinnamomum zeylanicum* variety of cinnamon, use it for all spice blends because it is more pleasing in flavor and easier to grind than the more common *C. cassia*, which tends to be bitter and very brittle. Chinese healers always take into account the five flavors—salty, sour, sweet, pungent and bitter. This seasoning roughly imitates these qualities. MAKES  $\frac{1}{4}$  CUP

1 (2-inch) piece cinnamon  
10 whole cloves  
8 whole star anise  
2 tablespoons black peppercorns  
2 tablespoons whole fennel seeds

**1** Break or crush cinnamon into small pieces. Using a mortar and pestle or small electric grinder, pound or grind herbs until finely ground.

**2** Transfer to a small dark-colored jar, label and store in a cool, dark place for up to 4 months.

## Baked Bananas with Garlic Citrus Caramel Sauce

Light spring meals deserve light desserts and this dish fits the bill nicely. Watch the bananas carefully so that they are tender yet not soggy. SERVES 4

2 bananas  
4 tablespoons brown sugar, divided  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup Garlic Citrus Caramel Sauce (below)

**1** Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

**2** Peel and slice bananas lengthwise and arrange, cut sides up, in oiled dish. Sprinkle each half with 1 tablespoon of the brown sugar. Bake 15 minutes or until bananas are soft.

**3** Place bananas on dessert plates and drizzle with Garlic Citrus Caramel Sauce.

## Garlic Citrus Caramel Sauce

Lightly spiked with orange, this sauce is actually mild-tasting, virtually odorless and surprisingly versatile. Because it isn't overpoweringly sweet, it can be used as a glaze for poached fish or chicken. In desserts, drizzle it over yogurt or ice cream or to add a finishing touch to pies and cakes. A small amount goes a long way, but for more of a good thing, double all of the ingredients except the garlic.

MAKES  $\frac{1}{4}$  CUP

6 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar  
2 tablespoons water  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup freshly squeezed orange juice  
1 teaspoon grated orange zest

**1** In a small, heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine garlic, sugar and water. Stir over low heat until sugar is dissolved. Increase heat to medium-high and bring the mixture to a boil. Adjust the heat to keep the mixture boiling and boil for 7 minutes, without stirring. Swirl the pan occasionally to move the garlic pieces around, but otherwise do not disturb the boiling sauce. Sauce should be light amber color.

**2** Remove pan from heat and gradually stir in orange juice. Return to medium heat, mash the garlic bits with the back of a wooden spoon and boil for 8 to 10 minutes, or until sauce is thick and syrupy and reduced to about  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup. Strain sauce or serve with the bits of caramelized garlic. Stir in zest.



## Asparagus, Peas, Sorrel and New Potatoes in Cashew Cream

Cashew Cream adds protein and a rich taste and texture to the baked vegetables in this versatile dish.

SERVES 4

12 small new potatoes  
1 cup cauliflower florets  
1 onion, quartered  
2 cups asparagus pieces  
1 cup freshly shelled peas  
1 cup fresh sorrel, cut in thin strips  
1½ cups Cashew Cream (at right)  
Salt and freshly ground pepper

**1** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a saucepan, combine potatoes, cauliflower and onion. Cover with water and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat and simmer

for 5 minutes. Add asparagus and simmer for 5 minutes or until vegetables are almost tender (the tip of a knife should meet with some resistance when vegetables are pierced). Drain, reserving cooking liquid.

**2** In an 8-cup, lightly oiled casserole dish, combine blanched vegetables, peas, sorrel and Cashew Cream. If mixture seems too thick, add up to ¼ cup of the reserved vegetable cooking liquid. Bake 35 minutes or until bubbly and lightly browned on top.

**3** Season to taste with salt and pepper.

## Cashew Cream

Use this wherever half-and-half is called for. You can make this sauce thicker by using another ½ cup cashews. It may then be substituted for heavy cream in recipes.

MAKES 1½ CUPS

½ cup cashew nuts  
1 cup rice or soy milk

**1** In a blender, combine nuts and milk. Blend on high until nuts are completely pureed and the cream is smooth. Store cream tightly covered in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.





A close-up photograph of lavender flowers in shades of purple and blue, with green stems and leaves visible. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

# 7 Sensational Silvers

By Jo Ann Gardner  
and Karen Bussolini





The blooms of Russian sage appear in late summer; interestingly, the plant is neither from Russia nor a sage.

Designed by nature to withstand climate extremes, silver plants light up the garden and enliven color schemes wherever they grow.

**W**hether designing a landscape from scratch or reworking a section of a perennial garden, most gardeners can't wait to start acquiring new plants. Walking through the gardens, snipping and digging, touching, smelling, noticing the surprises and delights of our plants is the joyful heart of gardening. Plants with similar characteristics tend to harmonize with each other, creating a sense of tranquility. The contrast of plants that are very different from each other adds zing. Paying attention to the characteristics of our favorite plants—color, shape, sheen, habit, texture and other qualities—helps us predict how they will work in combination with plants that have similar or different characteristics.

We started not with a theory of color and design but with muddling around in our own gardens, combining plants until they “felt right.” We learned that compiling a bouquet while strolling through the garden with snippers or walking a plant around the nursery to see how it looks with other plants inspires unanticipated combinations. Serendipitous self-sowers instructed us by making felicitous combinations on their own.

### The Art of Combining Silver Plants

Copying directly from other gardens is certainly fair game, but often it's the ideas, not the plants themselves, that take root in our own gardens. Liking the lovely tension between cool, bright *Artemisia ludoviciana* ‘Silver King’ and the chartreuse zinnias and nicotiana we saw flowering in the sun at the Berkshire Botanical Garden, for instance, inspired us to pair chartreuse-flowering *Alchemilla mollis* with the gleaming silver blades of *Pulmonaria* ‘Excalibur’ in a shady spot. Wiry, nodding native delphiniums weaving their way up through bold, spiny-tipped Zone 8 yuccas in a Texas garden suggested contrasts with our own hardy *Yucca filamentosa*. Once we realize that we like a certain kind of combination—warm with cool or bold with delicate—we can extrapolate to other kinds of plants that will grow happily in our own gardens.



## Color

Color is often what we notice first. It sets the emotional tone of a garden. We are excited by flamboyant color combinations or soothed by subtle ones. Yet color is the most personal of choices. One person's subtle seems dull to another, vibrant crosses the line to tacky for some and classic may seem tired.

Silver at its purest is not a color at all but the very essence of light. It is the chameleon of the plant kingdom, changing with light and season, hard to put your finger on. Silver can be retiring background or the star of the show, garish or subtle, soothing or distinctly exciting. Some silvers are stunning on their own—an avenue of poplars, a solitary shimmering eucalyptus, a helichrysum topiary. Silver plants have a unique ability to intensify other colors or to knit them together (sometimes at the same time). It is in relationship to other plants, whether blending or contrasting, that silvers, finding their strength, truly shine.

## Silver as Peacekeeper

On a hot day, the shade of a silver tree seems cooler than the shade from other trees. A silver passage in the garden provides respite. The many shades of silver, from gray-green to gray, pewter, bright silver or silver-blue, blend well with each other because of their shared tonal qualities. Silver gives white flowers a context that saves them from washing out in the sun. Silvers and grays have a special sympathy with pastel-colored flowers and the washed-out earth tones of plants such as New Zealand sedges. A drift of silver can buffer clashing colors, helping them blend together and giving our eyes a rest.

Some silver plants seem to look good with everything. We have seen Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*), lamb's ears (*Stachys byzantina* 'Helene von Stein'), blue oat grass (*Helictotrichon sempervirens*) and *Nepeta xfaassenii* 'Six Hills Giant' keeping the peace in gardens all over the United States. In a Connecticut garden, the nepeta edging a long allée knits together all the hues and tangle of a rose garden. In Minnesota, bright perennials are unified when displayed against a shimmering ribbon of spiky blue *Helictotrichon*, *Panicum virgatum* 'Heavy Metal' and *Perovskia*. In our own garden, *Stachys byzantina* 'Helene von Stein', with sparse silver hairs on gray-green leaves, is a fine bridge between plants on the green side and bright silvers. We suspect that whatever riot of color a garden might possess, a good dose of any of these four plants, or any number of silver substitutes, would make sense of the chaos.

## Silver Contrasts

Peace in the garden is fine up to a point, but a garden that only blends and never contrasts gets dull. For gardeners seeking drama, pairing any of silver's tonal qualities with their opposite qualities creates excitement. If a silver is bright and light, try a dark companion. Silver and gold is another case of opposites attracting. Many silver plants—notably the senecios, helichrysums, achilleas and santolinas—have yellow flowers, providing built-in warm contrast. The possibilities for dynamic combinations seem endless. If silver is cool, turn up the heat by pairing it with warm reds, russets and oranges. If it is a dull gray, create a glow with more brilliant tones. If it is a clear, simple tone, surround it with complex or muted neighbors with purple-green leaves or mauve flowers. If it is on the blue side, pair it with oranges or yellows across the color wheel.


## Texture

Combining plants with textures that are alike or different adds another dimension to garden vignettes. Texture is created by size and shape of leaves and by the feel or appearance of the leaves' surfaces. The lobed fans, deeply cut lace, or tiny, softly curling tendrils of artemisias contrast with linear grasses and with the round leaves of eucalyptus. It is difficult to appreciate the virtues of the many small-leafed nepetas, lavenders, orignums, helichrysum and santolinas when they are all jumbled together, as they often are in herb gardens. These plants might not contrast with each other, but their petite leaves make for big contrasts with *Verbascum bombyciferum*, agaves, yuccas and other large-leaved plants. Contrasting the many surface textures of silvers—shiny, dull, fuzzy, pebbled, soft, hard, leathery, downy, powdery, smooth and waxy—suggests many ways to enrich our combinations.

## Form

Paying attention to growing habit and silhouette (upright, laterally branching, curving, swirling, weeping, waving, mound, mat, or spiky vase-shaped) gives us additional opportunities to make exciting garden pictures. A few silver plants—Scottish thistles, artichokes and agaves—are so boldly architectural that they make striking contrasts with just about everything. Try juxtaposing spiky grasses with low scrambling, round-leaved plants; soft, low mounds with taller, more upright plants; or a hard architectural form with a frothy, indistinct outline.



A close-up photograph of a silvery artemisia plant. The plant has multiple stems with finely divided, feathery leaves that have a silvery-grey hue. Several upright stems bear clusters of small, yellow, daisy-like flower heads. The background is a soft-focus view of more of the same plant, creating a sense of a dense garden bed.

Most of the beautiful, silvery  
artemisia (named for the goddess  
Artemis) benefit from being cut  
back just before or after flowering to  
prevent the plant from sprawling.





## A History of Silvers

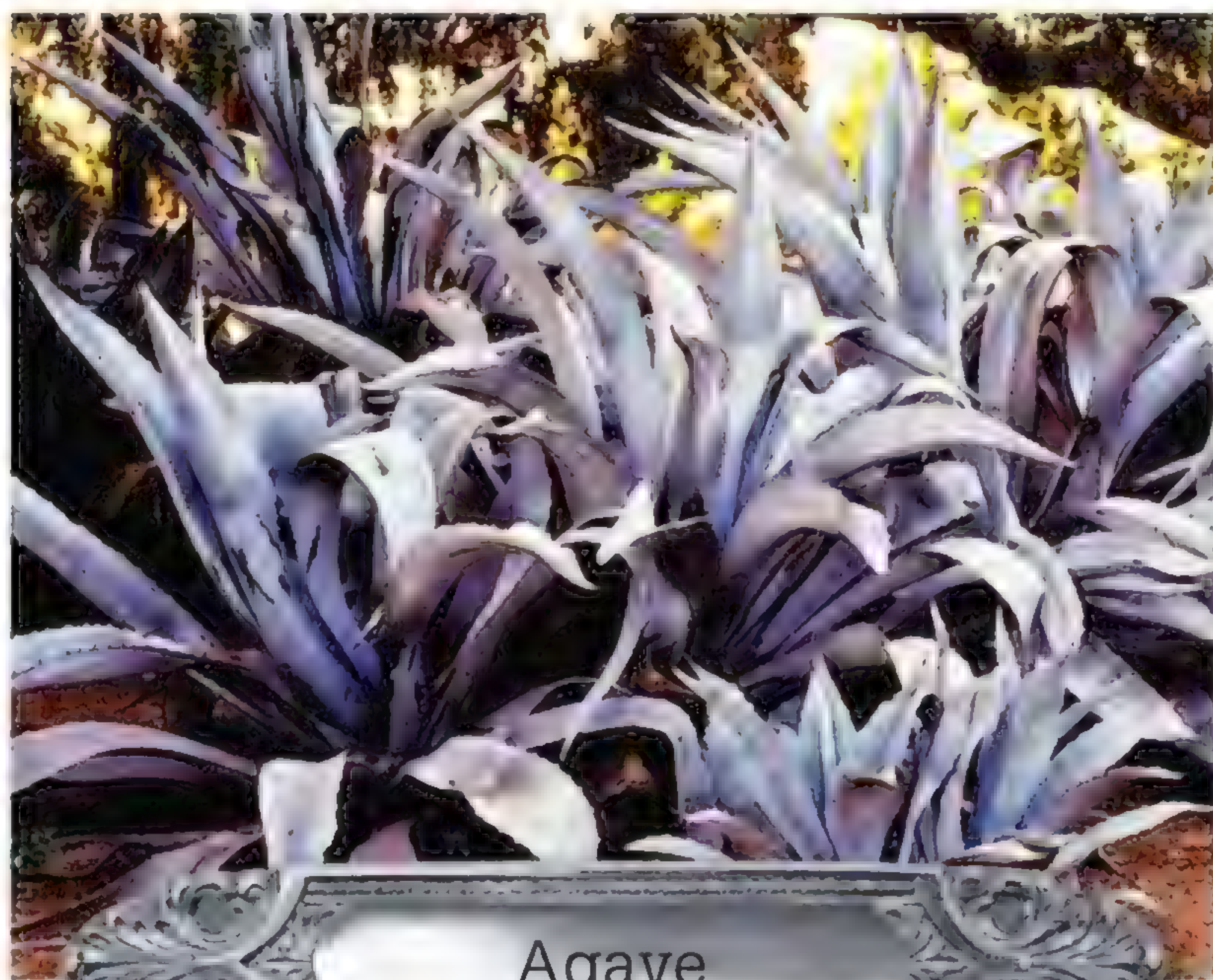
The silvers we admire today for their beauty were once regarded solely as useful plants, praised for their ability to cure or alleviate a wide variety of human complaints, from toothache to the pangs of childbirth. Classic silvers—artemisia, lavender, rue and sage—once were no more than familiar drugs in the ancient pharmacopoeia or drugstore. The fact that their leaves were downy or glaucous, a departure from normal green, did not create an aura of suspicion around them, as was the case with other plant oddities such as mandrake, whose bizarre-shaped roots earned it a reputation as a dangerous magical force to be approached with caution. On the contrary, no fear was attached to using the ruffled, gray-green horehound to soothe a cough or silvery gray wormwood as a cure for stomach complaints. These were common plants—despite their unusual appearance—and a familiar part of everyday life. True, lavender was an ancient symbol of mistrust, but this association was based on the plant's sharp scent rather than its silvery leaves.

### Dynamic Combinations: Alike but Different

Color, texture and form do not exist in isolation. They interact—or fail to—all at once. The more ways they interact, the more satisfying the combination. A simple combination of lamb's ears and cushion spurge works exceptionally well, not just because it contrasts gold and silver, warm and cool, but because the spurge's rounded flowerheads and bracts, small and smooth leaves arranged on upright stalks, smooth surface and modulated hues are strikingly different from the lamb's ears' mat of much larger, blade-like leaves, very fuzzy texture and uniform color.

In a container planting of *Begonia* 'Looking Glass' and elephant ears (*Colocasia esculenta* 'Black Magic'), we can see that although the leaves have a similar shape, the elephant ears are much bigger. Leaves have a similar texture, but the begonia's surface sparkles in sunlight, while the elephant ears remain dull. Major veins of both are green, but begonia is silver on the front and red on the back, shimmering and light in comparison to the dark, almost black, elephant ears. The plants' similarities are close and their differences extreme, adding up to a complex, resonant picture.





Agave

*Agave* spp.

Common name: century plant, woody lily

Family: Agavaceae, agave

Description: waxy succulent perennial

Origin: Americas

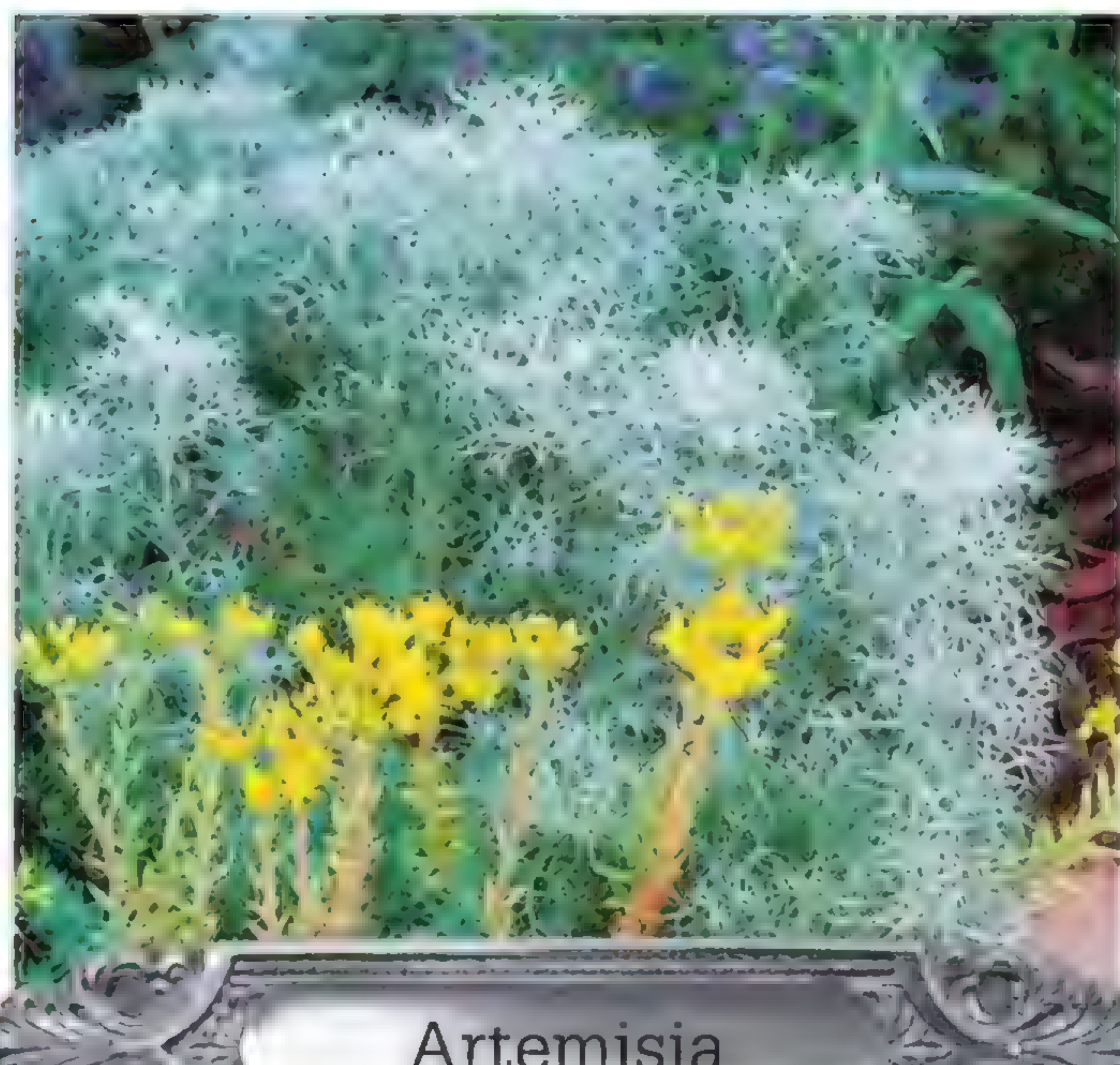
Site and soil: sun to shade; sharply drained

Height and width: 1.5 to 10 feet tall; 2.5 to 10 feet wide

Hardiness: Zones 5 to 10

Agaves are striking plants found in every possible climatic niche, from dry tropical coastal zones to alpine forest conditions where they are subject to moisture and snow. The silvery agaves originate in the American Southwest and Mexico, where they epitomize the landscape. Rosettes of rigid, fleshy, swordlike leaves, from narrow to wide, pointed and arching or perfectly rounded, are sleek and smooth or textured. Many have toothed margins, some with spines and vicious leaf tips with an elongated point that is fearsome in some species. Silvery agaves range in color from gray to powder-blue and their forms vary from relatively small to monumental, from 12 inches to 20 feet across, with flowering spikes up to 40 feet in the air. Lilylike flowers, pollinated by bats, moths or hummingbirds (depending on their type), bloom in terminal umbel-like clusters, racemes or panicles on leafless stems. The genus name from the Greek *agavos* means noble, a reference to this spectacle, while the common name (century plant) is based on the monocarpic habit of many agaves to flower infrequently—but it is misleading. Smaller species are faster-growing and may bloom when they are 3 or 4 years old; slower-growing, larger types may take 40 to 50 years to bloom, but not a century. Agaves flower only once and the plants die but leave progeny (offsets or pups) behind.

For millennia, agaves have sustained native people with food, fiber, drink and medicinal preparations. The commercial and illegal overharvesting of agaves has led to concerns about the destruction of their habitat. Natural variations among species result in taxonomic uncertainty—apparently identical plants may have different names.



Artemisia

*Artemisia* spp.

Common name: wormwood, sage brush

Family: Asteraceae, aster

Description: downy perennial, subshrub, shrub

Origin: deserts, dry fields, mountains, steppes;

Northern Hemisphere, South Africa, western South America

Site and soil: sun; dry, well-drained

Height and width: 5 inches to 4 feet tall; 12 inches to 4 feet wide

Hardiness: Zones 3 to 10

Named for the goddess Artemis, the genus is dominated by subshrubs, many evergreen or nearly evergreen. As plants with a long history of use as medicinals to treat a variety of complaints, they have always been represented in herb gardens. Gardeners value them for their beautifully cut foliage in the sterling to gray range, versatility of forms from ground-hugging to tall shrubs, and dependability. Bitter properties, present to some degree in all artemisias, are due to the chemical thujone, which gives them their characteristic bracing aroma and medicinal value as a vermifuge. Some have an important place in Traditional Chinese Medicine, and many are choice for crafts (especially wreaths).

When purchasing artemisias, do be aware that taxonomic confusion abounds among artemisias: species are shifted around, plants are sold under names that have no botanical standing and plants with the same names may bear little resemblance to one another (while plants with different names appear very much alike!).





## Butterfly Bush

*Buddleja* spp.

Common name: butterfly bush

Family: Buddlejaceae, butterfly

Description: downy shrub

Origin: riversides, rocky areas and scrub; Asia, Southwestern United States

Site and soil: sun; fertile, well-drained

Height: 3 to 20 feet tall; 4 to 15 feet wide

Hardiness: Zones 4 or 5 to 10

These old-fashioned shrubs are favored for their long, fragrant flower trusses so attractive to butterflies; their tolerance for drought condition; and their ability to grow up to 6 feet and just as wide in a single season from their roots. They are enjoying a renaissance of interest with the introduction of more compact, less weedy forms and a color range beyond the ordinary lilac-purple, including dark purple, reddish, blue and pink flowers. For the silver fancier, there is the added allure of types with intensely silvery leaves, a coloration that heretofore has been merely suggested in silver-backed foliage. The bush's form is wide and arching, loosely and irregularly vase-shaped, or compact in the newer dwarf types. (In butterfly bush parlance, the term "dwarf" is relative, since some of these may grow up to

6 feet tall.) Flowers of the Asian species discussed here are small and tubular, carried in dense pyramidal or conical heads, sweetly scented like honey and sometimes marked with a darker eye. Leaves are often lance-shaped and willowy, dully green above and silvery below. In some types, leaves appear entirely silver in their early growth. Named for an English botanist, Adam Buddle, the Latin genus is spelled with a *j* as in *Buddleja*, but the common name form is spelled *buddleia*. You will find both spellings in the trade.

In climates with colder winters, buddleias may die back to the ground in the same way as an herbaceous perennial, but they are fast growing and will come back from their roots amazingly fast when warm weather sets in to produce flowers by midsummer to late summer on full-grown bushes. Early-flowering bushes like *Buddleja alternifolia*, which produces flowers on previous year's growth, are thinned out after flowering and then pruned hard after frost. Later flowering types such as *B. davidii*, which produces flowers on the current year's growth, are pruned back about 12 inches or more just as new growth begins. If stems are left to 2 to 3 feet, bushes will bloom about the same time as if they were hard-pruned, but hard-pruning has the advantage of keeping bushes shorter and more compact. Even in warmer regions, where shrubs do not die back, they should be hard-pruned to maintain a dense shape.





## Heather

*Calluna vulgaris*

Common name: heather

Family: Ericaceae, heath

Description: downy shrub

Origin: moors, lowlands; Europe, Asia Minor

Site and soil: sun; acid, well-drained

Height and width: 6 to 24 inches tall; 12 to 14 inches wide

Hardiness: Zones 4 to 8

In heather's natural range it grows as a spreading cover over miles of otherwise barren ground and in highland and lowland habitats. It provides food and cover for grouse, deer, smaller mammals, reptiles and insects. Long recognized for its beauty, poets have sung its praise and ordinary people have turned it to practical use. The genus name, based on the Latin *kalluno* (to clean), refers to heather's use as a broom or brush. Growing on unused or discarded land, burned-over forest and poor soil, heather forms a dense, evergreen mat, upright or spreading, of tiny, scalelike foliage of overlapping pairs, most often smooth and fleshy, in shades of green from light to dark and sometimes gold, chartreuse or russet. Of interest to the silver fancier are the downy silver-gray sorts, of which there are many fine examples. In winter, leaves may be tinged dull chartreuse or purple. Plants

produce one-sided spikes of small, bell-shaped flowers in racemes of varying length, from 1/2 to 4 inches long. It is the presence of colorful sepals, before the plants bloom and after the flowers have faded, that gives heather its singular visual beauty, especially when massed. Heathers produce phenomenal quantities of seed that quickly establish a multitude of plants in favorable conditions. Anyone who has visited Scotland's heaths and witnessed vast, undulating stretches of rose and purple heathers and heaths (distinguished by their darker purple flowers) can appreciate this phenomenon and its impact on the imagination and daily lives of people living within its natural range.

Heather has been used for animal fodder, fuel, plant dyes, ropes, thatching, to stuff mattresses and as medicinal preparations. Flowers are a source of nectar for butterflies and bees, and heather honey, used in the ancient drink mead, is still highly prized. Heather is also called *ling*, derived from the Norse *lyng* (lightweight, as in a lightweight fuel). These little shrubs do best wherever cool, humid summer conditions prevail, as in coastal New England and the American Northwest, but they may also be grown inland. Plant them deeply with their lower foliage touching the soil in an open, sunny site, in humus-y, acidic soil amended with sand and peat. Over-fertilizing produces leggy, unhealthy plants. Ground that supports blueberries and rhododendrons should also grow heathers.





## Lavender

*Lavandula* spp.

Common name: lavender

Family: Lamiaceae, mint

Description: downy shrub, subshrub

Origin: Mediterranean

Site and soil: sun; sharply drained

Height and width: 12 inches to 3 feet tall; 20 inches to 4 feet wide

Hardiness: Zones 4 to 10

Lavender is a classic in every sense, cultivated since ancient times to the present day. It is loved for its bracing and refreshing scent—sharp and sweet, like jasmine or heliotrope with a shot of camphor—and its foliage and flower combination. From a woody-based mound of small, usually linear, leaves, numerous straight, broom-like stems arise in summer. These are topped by slender, conical heads packed with small, two-lipped flowers—in the violet to purple range, occasionally white or light pink—in dense whorls. Flowerheads are enhanced by the beauty of bud and calyx, often flushed in shades of violet-purple. When its scent is released by the sun and suffuses the air, the entire lavender ensemble of foliage, buds, flowers and aroma is overpowering to the senses, especially when plants are massed. For the silver collector, lavender's appeal is heightened by conspicuously downy foliage, from gray-green

and silver-green to woolly white. The genus name is derived from the Latin *lavare* (to wash), from the Greek and Roman tradition of adding lavender scent to bath water. Medicinally, lavender has a long history of use as an antiseptic and for treating headaches, insomnia and digestion ills. Its greatest practical value has been in the commercial production of essential oil used in perfumes and toiletries, for which special varieties have been developed.

It is not difficult to grow lavender satisfactorily if certain principles are followed. In cooler climates, lavender must develop a woody base before it can survive repeated winter frosts, so for this reason it is best to begin with sizeable purchased plants. Fast-growing *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Lady' is an exception. In the humid South, lavender must be kept dry with a pebble mulch (light colored to reflect sun is best) at its base. Wherever it is grown, it must have sunny and airy conditions and soil where water never puddles. If these conditions are fulfilled, the hardiest lavender (*L. angustifolia*) can be grown in areas with -30-degree winter temperatures. Poorly sited lavender, no matter how hardy, will succumb. Lavenders can be left in place for many years, but with age they usually become a dense mass of woody stems with few blooms and dead patches. It is usually best to propagate them every few years. Fungal diseases, mostly a problem in hot, humid areas, include Fusarium root rot and leaf spot. Silveriness can depend on maturity of foliage (younger is greener, usually).





Sage

*Salvia* spp.

Common name: sage, salvia

Family: Lamiaceae, mint

Description: downy annual, short-lived perennial, subshrub

Origin: dry meadows, rocky slopes, scrubland, light woodland, moist grasslands in temperate and subtropical regions

Sun and site: sun or partial shade; dry-moist, well-drained

Height and width: 6 inches to 5 feet tall; 12 inches to 5 feet wide

Hardiness: Zones 4 to 10

Salvias belong to a large genus of about 900 species distributed around the world (more than half of them from the Americas), in varied habitats from dry and rocky to moist and grassy. Plants grow up on square stems that may become rounded in maturity, from rhizomatous or tuberous roots, and are found among very hardy to frost-tender types that must be overwintered indoors as mature plants or cuttings. In mild climates, some are evergreen.

Nectar-rich tubular or hooded flowers are attractive to hummingbirds, bees and butterflies. They bloom sparsely to prolifically on candelabras, spikes or panicles, enhanced by the colorful calyces that hold them. Flowers in the reddish purple range, as well as cream-white, create attractive combinations with generally hairy, sometimes pebbly, and textured foliage. In some

species, like *Salvia argentea*, leaves are quite woolly—from small and lance-shaped to huge and rounded (nearly heart-shaped), from silvery-white to gray-green.

Often flowers, foliage, or the entire plant is strongly aromatic, perhaps a defense strategy against browsing animals. Aromas may be quite pronounced, from fruity and musky to camphorous (similar to cooking sage). The genus name is based on the Latin *salvage* (to heal or save), and *salveus* (uninjured) refers to salvias' role as an ancient healing herb as well as food. Many sages, even those regarded as "ornamental," have a history of use in their native habitats. Native salvias, for instance, have been used for centuries by American Indians. Silver sages are workhorses of the herbaceous border for formal or informal plantings among rocks.

## Show Us Your Silvers!

Do you love silver herbs? If your garden is full of silvers, or features just a few strategically placed, we'd love to see what you've done. Share with us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/theherbcompanion](http://www.facebook.com/theherbcompanion)), or e-mail your photos to [editor@herbcompanion.com](mailto:editor@herbcompanion.com) and we'll show the Herbie community what you have.



## Russian Sage

*Perovskia* spp.

Common name: Russian sage

Family: Lamiaceae, mint

Description: downy perennial

Origin: rocky, open sites; Afghanistan to Tibet

Site and soil: sun; sharp- to well-drained

Height and width: 2 to 4 feet tall; 1 to 4 feet wide

Hardiness: Zones 3 to 8 or 9

From small beginnings, the merest hint of silver sprouting from bare stems in spring, Russian sage grows almost as wide as it is tall by late summer, when the entire plant is covered with small, gray, serrated leaves along its silver stalks, adorned by a multitude of tiny blue or lavender-blue flowers on slender spikes. Russian sage is neither Russian nor a sage. It is named for a Russian general and it is called “sage” because of its camphorous aroma. Russian sage has a history of use where it is indigenous. Its flowers are eaten fresh and the leaves are used like tobacco.

Immune to drought, heat, humidity, pests and diseases, growing as well in the southern United States as in the Northeast, Russian sage is a gardener’s dream come true, an outstanding plant of aesthetic value that is relatively easy to grow in virtually every region of the country.

Avoid overcrowding, any shade and rich soil, which promotes leggy, weak growth and a demand for staking. Russian sage nicely dominates the scene wherever it grows, whether as a billowy hedge, a swathe of silver within the border, or a single accent. It goes with rocks, a rock wall, or a rocky outcropping as in its

native habitat. Its silvery gray foliage and lavender-blue flowers complement and improve every conceivable color from the brightest to the lightest pastels as well as white.

One of the most effective accent plantings we’ve seen was on a rise between house and driveway, where a single plant, seen from afar, resembled a wide, airy shrub. Up close, white and lilac-blue alyssum (*Lobularia*) planted at its feet echoed the same color above. It is a companion plant for most border stalwarts, improving all of them by its association.

The best of the Russian sages is *Perovskia atriplicifolia* from Pakistan, with soft blue to lavender-blue flowers. *P. abrotanoides* has more violet flowers and noticeably fringed leaves. *P. ‘Hybrida’*, a cross between these species, has longer flower spikes of lavender-blue and more fringed leaves than *P. atriplicifolia*. The cultivars *P. ‘Blue Spire’* and *‘Longin’*, which also have deeply cut foliage and lavender-blue flowers, are more upright. *P. ‘Filigran’* has feathery foliage, an erect habit and long, blue flower spikes. Recently, *P. atriplicifolia* ‘Little Spire’, a dwarf plant, has introduced a new look. Growing 20 inches tall and 20 to 24 inches wide with the most silvery of all foliage, almost white—a great contrast to its cool, lavender-blue flower spikes—it is easier to fit into a tight border or rock garden. ♡

*Taken from Elegant Silvers: Striking Plants for Every Garden ©2005 by Jo Ann Gardner and Karen Bussolini. All photos in the book ©2005 by Karen Bussolini. Published by Timber Press, Portland, OR. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.*



### More Silver Plants for Your Garden

While we only discuss seven, the book *Elegant Silvers* (buy on Page 60) outlines 99 types of silver plants. Below are some more silvers worth checking out, organized by the feature you might be looking for:

**Flowering perennials:** You might like the colorful florets of yarrow (*Achillea* spp.) or the perfumed flowers of pinks (*Dianthus* spp.).

**Creepers or small upright shrubs:** Thyme (*Thymus* spp.) is beautiful in the garden, and lungwort (*Pulmonaria* spp.) grows under the canopy of deciduous trees.


**Low, wide shrubs:** Everlasting flower (*Helichrysum* spp.) can be up to 6 feet wide. Sun rose (*Helianthemum* spp.) and rue (*Ruta* spp.) are more moderate in their growth, at around 18 inches

and 30 inches wide respectively. Lavender cotton (*Santolina* spp.) is evergreen, but short-lived.

**Grasses:** Blue oat grass (*Helictotrichon sempervirens*) is a middle-sized, cool-season grower. Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) is a tall, beautiful prairie grass.

**Trees:** Silver pear (*Pyrus salicifolia*) is a slender, deciduous tree. Willows (*Salix* spp.) are fast-growing.





Russian sage (pictured), artemisia, agave, butterfly bush and sage are deer-resistant—these plants aren't their first choice, but deer may eat them if they are hungry enough.



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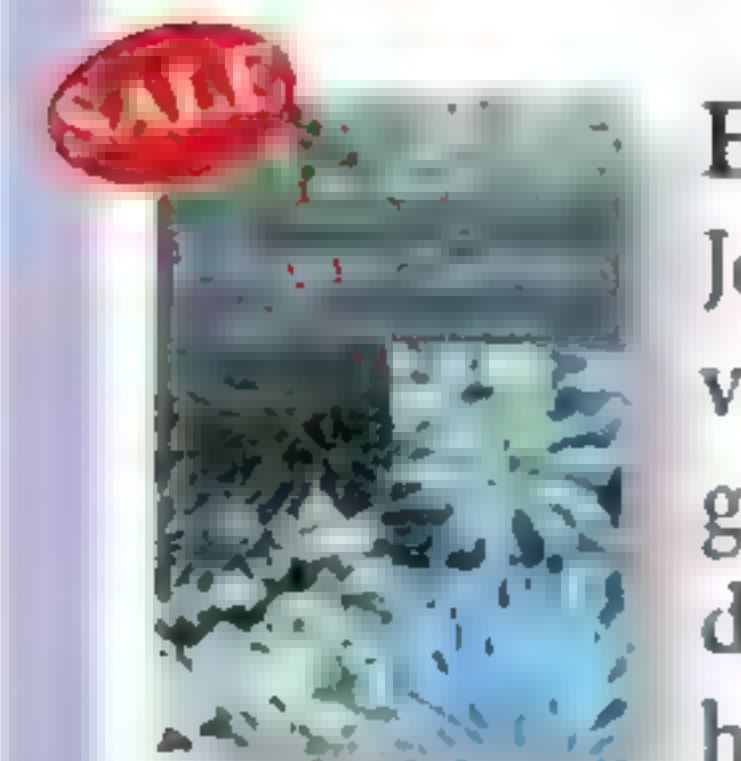


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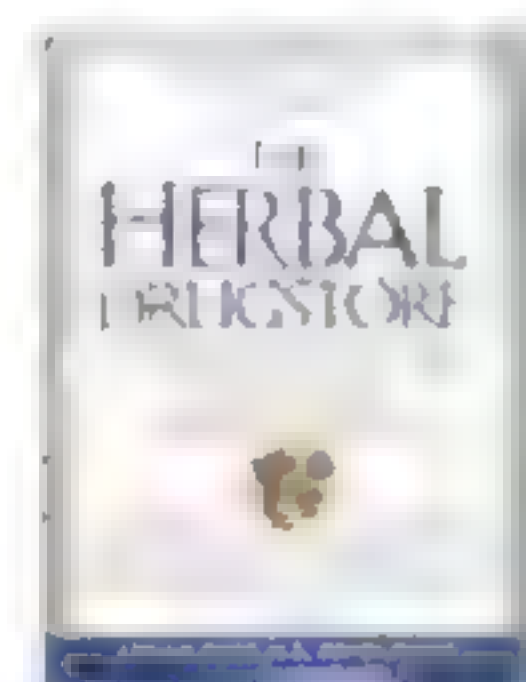
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## 9 Herbs for Healthy Eyes

BY LINDA B. WHITE, M.D.

The plant world offers a medley of prevention and treatment to keep your peepers bright and well.

**Q** Are there herbs that can help support healthy eyes?

**A** Sight is one of our most cherished senses. We read, appreciate art, observe nature and connect with loved ones by gazing into these “windows of the soul.” We spend good money on cosmetics to enhance the eyes’ natural beauty, and it just makes sense to promote our eyes’ health as well.

Easy steps include wearing sunglasses and hats outdoors, eating well, maintaining a healthy weight, managing stress and avoiding cigarette smoke. Some medicinal

plants also might be worth incorporating into the routine.

**Eyebright** (*Euphrasia officinalis*) has long been a folk remedy for the eyes. Most natural food stores contain teas, tinctures and homeopathic eyedrops made from this herb. A South African study found that eyebright-containing eyedrops hastened recovery from conjunctivitis (redness and discharge caused by irritation of the outside lining of the eye). Extracts lower blood sugar in diabetic rats. Whether the same effect holds for humans isn’t yet known. (Diabetes raises the risk for several eye diseases—see sidebar on Page 64.)



## 4 Eye Diseases

Cataracts are so named because opacities in the eyes' lens create the effect of looking through a waterfall (aka cataract). Risk factors include advancing age, diabetes, smoking, exposure to sunlight, excessive use of alcohol, poor nutrition, chronic stress and long-term use of corticosteroids.

In glaucoma, an imbalance in the production and drainage of the fluid within the eye builds pressure, compressing the optic nerve and causing tunnel vision and, eventually, blindness.

Macular degeneration affects a specialized part of the retina. Activities such as reading become steadily more difficult. Genetics play a role, but there are other risk factors, including advancing age, smoking, high blood pressure, obesity, inadequate nutrition and exposure to sunlight.

Diabetic retinopathy is a disease in which chronically elevated blood glucose levels damage the tiny blood vessels in the retina. Blood vessels may swell and leak. Also, new blood vessels can form. Both processes interfere with visual perception. High blood pressure also produces the disease.

**Ginkgo** (*Ginkgo biloba*) improves blood flow to the retina (the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye). Preliminary research suggests extracts improve vision in people with glaucoma. It is also antioxidant and protects nerve cells, including those in the eye.

**Coleus** (*Coleus forskohlii*) contains forskolin. Forskolin eyedrops have been shown to reduce the production of fluid within the eye, thereby reducing pressure. Therefore, it may have relevance in the treatment of glaucoma.

**Cannabis** (*Cannabis sativa*) contains cannabinoids, which, among many actions, reduce pressure within the eye in people with glaucoma. The first studies were done in people who smoked marijuana and showed that the pressure reduction lasted three to four hours. Subsequent studies have tried different methods to deliver cannabinoids (intravenously, oral or inhaled). The downsides are side effects (dry, pink eyes; reduced blood pressure; alterations in mental state and behavior) and legality (unless you live in a state that has legalized medical cannabis). However, the identification of receptors for cannabinoids in the eye has raised interest in the development of eyedrops.

**Green tea** (*Camellia sinensis*) contains antioxidants, which mop up free radicals—substances that create the so-called oxidative damage underlying many chronic diseases, including glaucoma, macular degeneration and cataracts. Furthermore, lab studies show that treating retinal cells with green tea's polyphenols protects them from damage from ultraviolet light. (Such damage raises the risk for macular degeneration. UV light also contributes to cataracts.)

**Bilberry** (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) contains potent antioxidant flavonoids called anthocyanins. Its American botanical cousins blueberry and cranberry also contain such chemicals. During World War II, Royal Air Force pilots reported that eating bilberry jam improved their night vision. While initial studies supported such claims, more recent trials have not shown that bilberry significantly improves night vision. Most studies have used healthy volunteers with normal or above-average eyesight. Whether or not bilberry extracts might benefit elders with deteriorating night vision remains to be seen. One recent study did find that anthocyanins from another berry—**black currant** (*Ribes*



Ginkgo protects nerve cells, like those in the eye.



Cannabis can help regulate eye pressure.



Bilberry contains potent antioxidants.



## For Eye Health, Control Blood Sugar



Elevated levels of glucose (sugar) damage proteins, generate free radicals and accelerate aging. Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in the United States. People with this disease carry an increased risk of cataracts, macular degeneration, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. Even in people without diabetes, high-glycemic diets (those rich in simple carbohydrates, which rapidly increase blood glucose) have been linked to a heightened risk of macular degeneration and cataracts.

*nigrum*)—hastened adaptation to the dark and also reduced eye fatigue.

Preliminary studies in humans from the 1980s suggested promise for managing cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. Studies in laboratory rats show extracts may defend against cataracts and glaucoma. In other studies, extracts protect nerve cells in the retina, strengthen blood vessels, improve circulation, and block the formation of new blood vessels, a process involved in diseases of the retina such as diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration. Leaf and berry extracts also have an antidiabetic effect—a relevant action, given the high risk of eye diseases among diabetics.

Many herbs, fruits and vegetables have antioxidant power. **Garlic** (*Allium sativum*) is one. Preliminary lab research suggests it may help prevent cataracts. **Turmeric** (*Curcuma longa*) contains the potent antioxidant curcumin, which has been shown to protect against cataract formation in rats, both alone and in combination with vitamin E.

It's important to note that most of the eye conditions discussed here come on so slowly that people may not develop noticeable symptoms until the disease has become severe. The best strategy is regular eye examinations. Early detection and prompt treatment can prevent significant visual loss. 🌿

Linda B. White, M.D., co-author of *The Herbal Drugstore*, is visiting assistant professor in the Integrative Therapies Program at Metropolitan State College in Denver, where she teaches herbal medicine. The list of sources for this article is extensive. To receive a copy, please e-mail [editor@herbcompanion.com](mailto:editor@herbcompanion.com), or write The Herb Companion, 1503 SW 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609.

{ The National Eye Institute ([www.nei.nih.gov](http://www.nei.nih.gov)) has more information on these and other issues of eye health. }

## More Help for Healthy Eyes

Antioxidants quench free radicals, which cause oxidative damage throughout the body, including the eyes. Low levels of antioxidants correlate with an increased risk of cataracts, macular degeneration and possibly glaucoma; higher dietary intakes seem to protect against such age-associated eye diseases.

A large trial called the Age-Related Eye Disease Study found that supplementation with vitamins C (500 mg) and E (400 IU), beta-carotene (15 mg) and zinc (80 mg) for an average of six years significantly reduced the risk of progression to advanced macular degeneration.

Lutein and zeaxanthins are carotenoids that form the pigment for the macula, an area at the back of the eye key to visual acuity. Antioxidant and anti-inflammatory, they help filter out damaging blue light and ultra-violet light. Higher dietary intakes of lutein and zeaxanthins correlate with a reduced risk of cataracts and macular degeneration, and may also slow progression of the latter. Food sources include dark green leafy vegetables, guava, peas, broccoli, squash, carrots, yellow potatoes, corn, oranges and egg yolks. Nettle, dandelion, calendula, chrysanthemum and lamb's quarters are herb sources.

Omega-3 fatty acids are anti-inflammatory, help maintain the fluidity of cell membranes and protect the retina from oxidative damage. Higher intakes of fish and fish oil (EPA and DHA) reduce the risk of macular degeneration and may even slow its course. Omega-3s may help reduce dry eye syndrome.





# A Spot for Spring Tonics

These spring herbs are known  
for their restorative effects.

BY KATHLEEN HALLORAN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GAYLE FORD

In early spring, we all hunger for green. The vibrant green of new life in the garden draws us outdoors, and I remember from my many years in cold climates how often that felt like emerging from hibernation. The sun's warmth on my face, the feel of the dirt and that chartreuse green of tiny new shoots all worked like a tonic on my winter-weary spirit.

Today, most of us aren't tied to the seasons and the land as our ancestors were. We can eat a salad anytime we want, we don't have to make it through the winters on roots and beef jerky, and we take plenty of vitamins so we don't get anemic. So why is it that, especially in the early springtime, I crave salads and other green things loaded with vitamins as much as I crave sunshine? Even if these yearnings



are just ancestral echoes, you can satisfy them with a traditional Southern rite of spring—the spring tonic.

### What is a tonic?

Generally, the term “spring tonic” referred to plants that were traditionally foraged in the wild in the springtime for their invigorating and restorative effects. I don’t know about you, but I don’t have a lot of spare foraging time in my life, so I say bring ’em closer. The garden shown here is a seasonal one, designed to provide a steady supply of nutritious greens for those satisfying, fresh spring salads. It is also meant to pay homage to some herbs that are more often seen on weedy roadsides than in garden beds, such as the lowly dandelion.

Banish the word “weed” from your thinking, because you’re in control of this little bed tucked away in the backyard, and weediness is just a state of mind. You can enjoy the bitter bite of young dandelion leaves and the tartness of sorrel, or young leaves of the unfortunately named stinging nettle, without inflicting any negative cultural baggage on yourself. Toss up as many different lettuces and tonic herbs as you can fit in a salad bowl, spritz it with your favorite herbal dressing, and eat your weeds with a clear conscience.

### A Single-Season Garden

The perennial rhubarb is included here because it’s always such a welcome sight in early spring, so it anchors the corner of this little garden bed. But many of the other plants, including the lettuces, arugula, spinach and the herbs grown for their greens, will thrive through the cooler months until the summer heat pushes them to flower, set seed and be done for the season.

## Plants for a Tonic Garden

**PARSLEY** (*Petroselinum crispum*). Italian flat-leaf or the familiar curly variety, both types are loaded with vitamins, easy to chop, and can be added to salads or tossed in a savory dish late in the cooking stage. Grow this one from a start from your neighborhood garden center rather than from seed, as it can be slow to germinate.

**CHICORY** (*Cichorium* spp.). Bitter greens in this genus include curly endive, also described as frisée, and escarole. Both are better eaten young, or blanched to remove some of their bitterness if larger.

**RHUBARB** (*Rheum rhabarbarum*). This perennial can live for a long time, so plant it in the back or someplace where it can live on beyond the season. Grow from crowns or divisions, and put a shovelful of aged manure or good compost in the planting hole. Great source of vitamin C.

**STINGING NETTLE** (*Urtica dioica*). Traditional spring tonic herb, rich in minerals and vitamins. Harvest young leaves and shoots to eat fresh; harvest older leaves carefully, as they have irritating hairs (hence the name) and are usually eaten steamed. Grows 2 to 4 feet tall, so plant toward the back so that you’re not likely to brush against it.

**LETTUCES** (*Lactuca sativa*). Many wonderful varieties to try in a range of colors, from deep purple and red to light green, romaines and butterheads, crisp and frilly, smooth, speckled—lettuces to suit every taste.

**VIOLETS** (*Viola* spp.). The annual pansies and Johnny-jump-ups, as well as both annual and perennial violets, contribute colorful, perky, edible flowers to the spring garden.

**DANDELION** (*Taraxacum officinale*). Eat the leaves when still small in early spring. Common lawn varieties will do if not treated, but varieties meant for gardens are also available online. Dandelions are perennial and taprooted, so be sure to harvest the whole root when you’re done.

**SPINACH** (*Spinacia oleracea*). These popular greens are nutritious and delicious right out of the garden or lightly steamed.

**ARUGULA** (*Eruca vesicaria*), also known as rocket. Cool-season annual with green leaves harvested to add zesty, peppery flavor to salads.

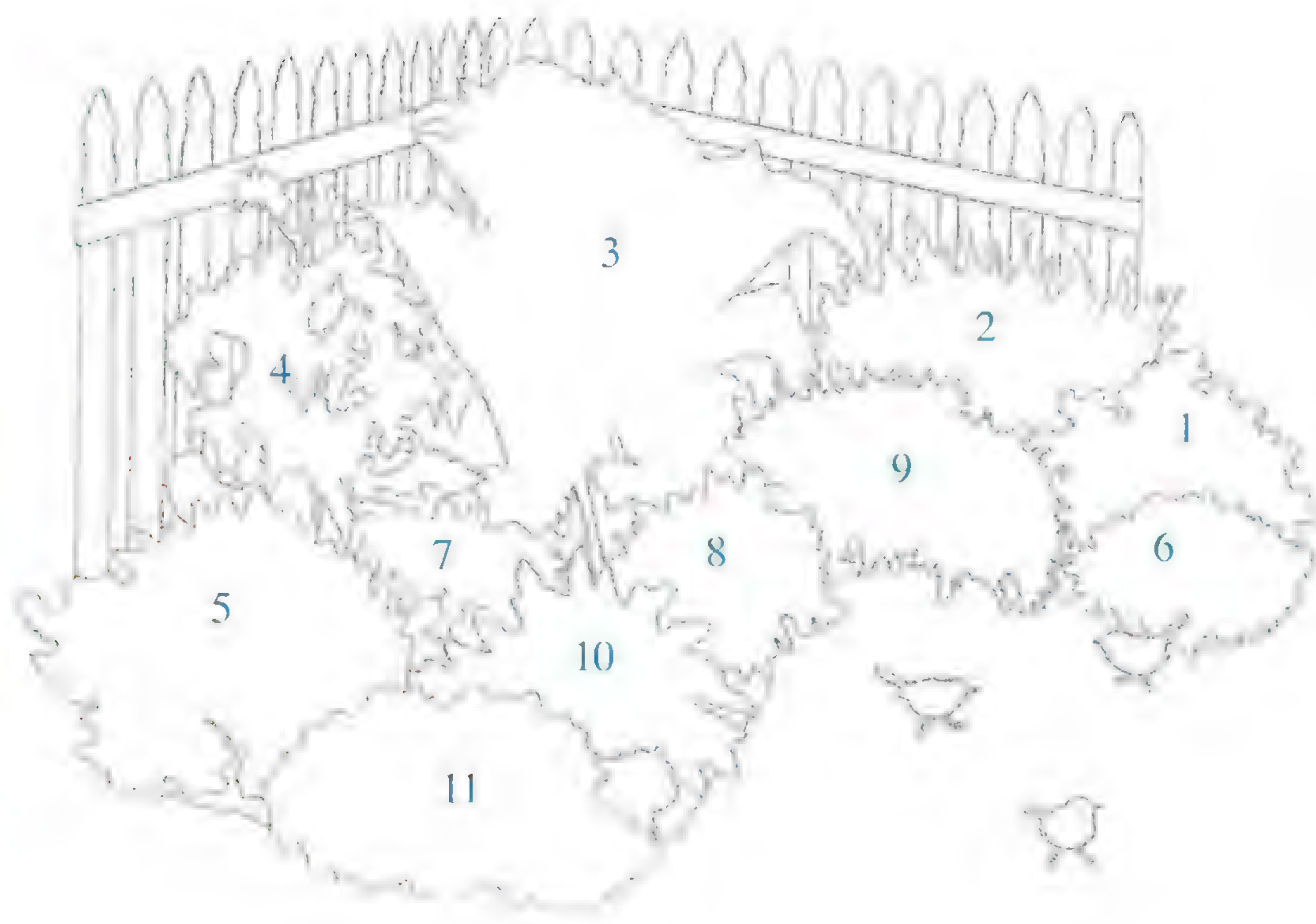
**SORREL** (*Rumex acetosa*). Also try the more refined **French sorrel** (*R. scutatus*) and some of the attractive new sorrel varieties. This perennial plant is rich in vitamins and minerals with a tangy, fresh taste.

**NASTURTIUMS** (*Tropaeolum majus*). Leaves and flowers are beautiful, useful, even tasty, commonly available in a range of colors and easy to grow from seed. Confusingly enough, common garden nasturtiums are not in the *Nasturtium* genus, which does include watercress (*N. officinale*).



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## GARDEN SPACES



I've included violas for their edible flowers, which to my way of thinking are a fine garnish for a fresh spring salad; nasturtiums deliver color and flavor in both the leaves and flowers. I include parsley in this little garden for the simple convenience when salad-gathering at dinnertime, as it's worth so much more than garnish status.

Here in Texas where I live now, the fierce summer heat is a time of dormancy for many if not most plants (and people), so the early spring garden is particularly welcome. You can start early and harvest daily through the spring, then yank the whole plants out before they scatter their seed, as some of these reseed a little too vigorously for comfort. Wherever you live, dandelions are less welcome when their cheerful yellow flowers turn into puffballs that scatter the seed through the neighborhood, so be watchful. Some herbs, such as sorrel, can either be grown as annuals and removed, or deadheaded and left to grow on, depending on your plans for the plot. You can pop in some

summer bedding plants to fill in the holes, or dig in compost and other organic soil amendments to get the corner plot ready for your next garden in the fall.

There are countless new varieties of old favorites to include in a garden like this, as well as many other traditional spring tonic herbs and spring greens in general. From one season to the next and from one year to the next, you can continue your favorites while replacing others with new edible plants to try out or grow in rotation. Sometimes a garden meant for a single season can evolve to earn a more permanent place in your landscape. Or you can enjoy the planting for a season and move on to something else.

## A Daily Habit

Much of this spring garden can be grown from seed as soon as the ground can be worked. Once they sprout and start growing, you can give them a dollop of liquid seaweed to give the roots a boost, and then an organic nitrogen fertilizer for green growth, either granular



## Plant Key

1. Parsley
2. Chicory
3. Rhubarb
4. Stinging nettle
5. Lettuce
6. Violets
7. Dandelion
8. Spinach
9. Arugula
10. Sorrel
11. Nasturtiums

or liquid at half strength. Thin them by cutting unwanted seedlings at soil level, or transplant them to where you want them (or pot up a few for friends).

When the young plants get to harvestable size, turn visiting this backyard garden, harvest basket in hand, into a daily habit. It's a great excuse to be outside, if only for a little while, and this lets you keep a watchful eye on the garden to keep it tidy and well-mannered. Being able to harvest just as many leaves as you need, rather than whole heads like you buy in the grocery store, is the freshness benefit of growing your own; the regular pruning keeps the plants shapely and productive and helps extend the season.

There are few meals that aren't improved—nutritionally and on every other level—by a salad fresh from the garden. After all, sunshine and salads are the tonics of spring—indulge in both liberally! 🌱

*Kathleen Halloran is a freelance writer and editor living and gardening in beautiful Austin, Texas.*



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# Gardens by Moonlight



BY JIM LONG

Watch your garden transform at night with pink and white flowers and light-reflecting walkways.

I sometimes stroll through my garden enjoying how different it is at night. Not only do the white flowers glow with unexpected light, the pinks and lighter yellows seem to have a vibrancy absent in daylight. When my friend, the late educator and herbalist Betty Wold, visited my garden one summer morning years ago, she asked me why there were no pink and white flowers in my garden. I replied that I really didn't like those colors.

"But if you have only darker colors, none of those show up in the moonlight," she chided me with a laugh.

## Night Scents

Over the years, I have come to appreciate the more subtle floral colors, not for their daytime hues, but for how magical they become after sunset, even in simple starlight. A moonlit garden has a different set of fragrances—some subtle, some pronounced. In the heat of the day, many essences are lost to our senses because the heat evaporates them so quickly. At night, they are considerably more noticeable. Dianthus, which has a lovely, clove-scented fragrance by day, is absolutely delicious at night.

A moonlight garden should have lots of fragrant things to smell, including plants to walk on along the pathways. Creeping thymes, such as caraway and lemon thyme, are good additions. You might not even notice their scents in the daylight, but at night, when your senses are more attuned, you will be aware of the fragrances as you walk.

## Seeing By Night

I have light-colored gravel pathways in my garden—unremarkable by day; lighted walks by moonlight. In the background, I have a little fish-pond fountain, and the trickling water adds a peaceful backdrop to the allure of the garden.



Jenny James



Susan A. Roth



Plants such as the often-overlooked yucca even change shape after dark. In the daytime, the waxy, cream-colored blossoms hang down like bells. But at night, when the air has cooled, the flowers turn somewhat upward, releasing their scent to attract the moths that pollinate them.

Simpler elements of my garden, such as a light-gray limestone bench, look most inviting by the full moon. During the day, there are often so many interruptions, noises and responsibilities that I seldom get to sit and enjoy my garden. But at night, when the world is quiet and others' demands on my time have ceased, I like to retreat to my nighttime garden. Many times I've sat on the bench with a midnight snack, enjoying the serenity.

## Let the Sun Go Down on Me

There are myriad plants to choose from that magically transform themselves from almost invisible in sunlight to glowing performers at night. Any plant you choose with the name 'Alba' after it will be white, such as rose campion (*Lychnis coronaria* 'Alba'), for example, or *Dianthus deltoides* 'Alba'. White, yellow and pink hollyhocks shine like subtle beacons, even in starlight. Glowing additions such as the white echinaceas, like 'White Swan' and 'Fragrant Angel', seem to pop into heightened reality at night. Angel's trumpets (*Datura innoxia*), white salvia (*Salvia coccinea* 'Snow Nymph') and Shasta daisies all show up like little walkway lights.

Even the gray plants, like gray santolina (*Santolina chamaecyparissus*) or curlicue wormwood (*Artemisia versicolor* 'Seafoam'), awaken at night, as does dusty miller (*Senecio cineraria*) and curry plant (*Helichrysum italicum*). Plants with fuzzy, gray leaves like my favorite, silver sage (*Salvia argentea*), seem more alive under

the moon. All of the clary sages look fanciful at night, as well. Don't despair if you can't locate or grow this variety, as even silver-leaf creeping thyme and dwarf ribbon grass (*Phalaris arundinacea* 'Dwarf Garters') glow subtly at night.

Any plant with "silver" in its name, like silver southernwood (*Artemisia abrotanum* 'Silver'), is a good choice. Vines, such as moonflower (*Ipomoea alba*), add additional charm. Moonflower's 6-inch-diameter blossoms are open only at night when they release a rich fragrance and attract fascinating large moths. The flowers themselves, on a moonlit evening, are so deliciously bright they appear to be lit from inside.

Other plants to add for moonlight viewing and fragrance include white spider flower (*Cleome hassleriana* 'Helen Campbell'), white peonies, white roses and night phlox (*Zaluzianskya capensis*), also called "midnight candy" (which is a clue to its charming appeal). Any of the evening primroses (*Oenothera* spp.), including our Missouri native, *O. macrocarpa*, send forth their fragrance in the evening.

## Planting a Moonlight Garden

There are special considerations to making a moonlight garden. First, you need full sun for most plants, and giving them full sun generally equals full moonlight. You don't want big shadows cast by neighboring plants to block out the moonlight, so choose accordingly. I like to bunch the brighter whites together rather than scatter them about. The duller whites and yellows can be clustered, as well. With the plants grouped this way, the white and yellow flowers will come into their own at night. 🌙

Contributing Editor Jim Long writes and gardens at his farm, Long Creek Herbs, in the Ozark Mountain



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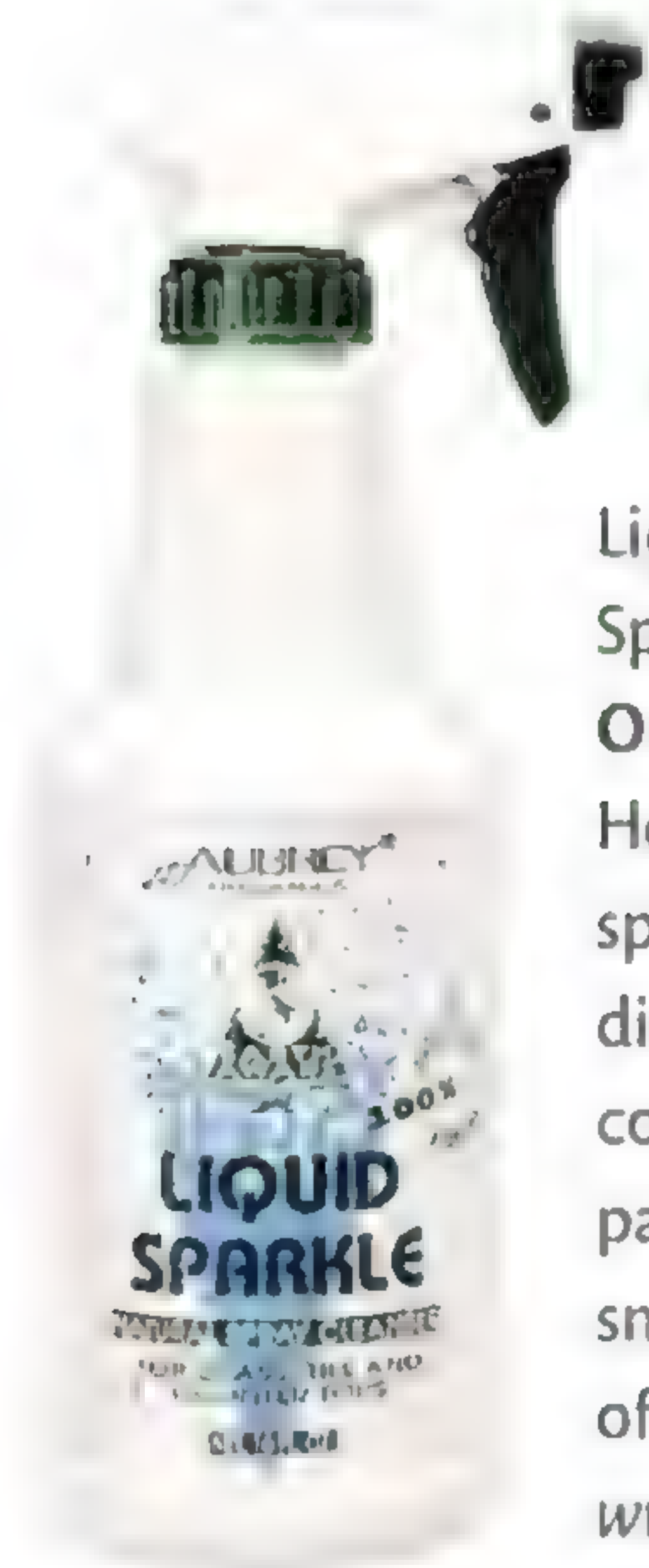
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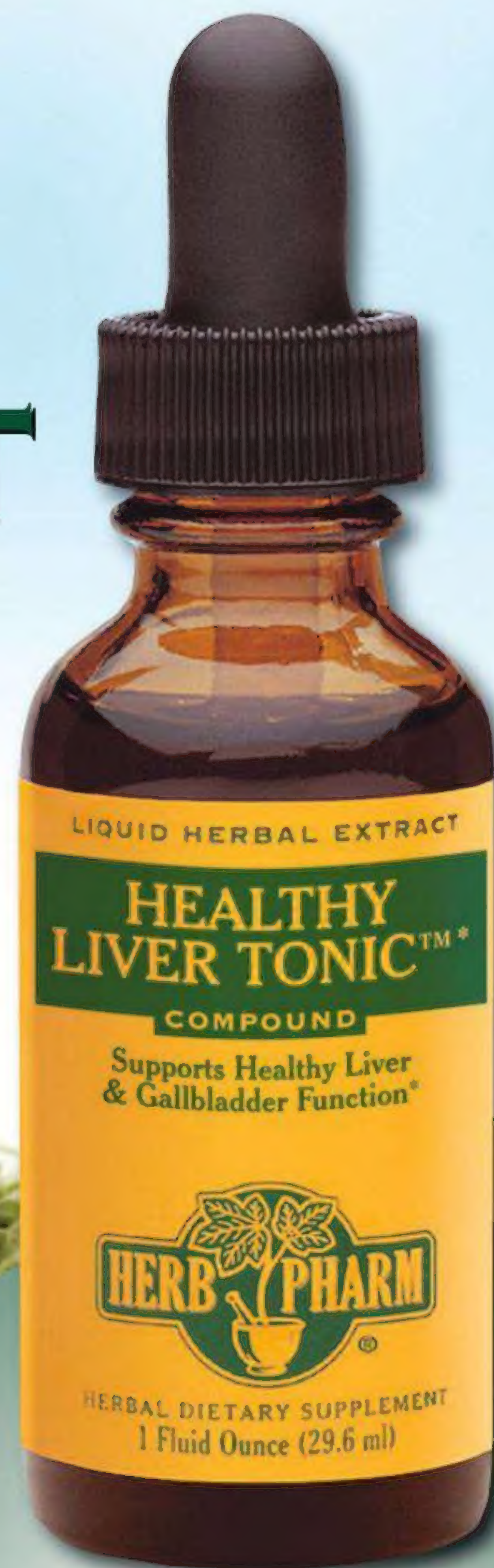
# Whip Up Some *Spring*

This spring, dress up the early strawberries with fresh mint sprigs and homemade whipped cream for an easy, delicious dessert. Finely chop  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup fresh mint leaves and stir into 1 pint heavy whipping cream. Refrigerate for an hour or more. Meanwhile, place a metal bowl and the mixing blades or whisk from your mixer in the freezer. Strain leaves from cream, pour into chilled bowl with  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon vanilla extract and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup powdered sugar (if desired). With the cold utensils, whip the cream into medium peaks. Top the strawberries with the cream, add mint garnishes, and serve.





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Circle #6; see card pg 61

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Circle #2; see card pg 61



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